TESTIMONY OF WILLIAM CLINTON POWELL DIRECTOR, CUSTOMER SERVICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT RELATIONS OF

CRAIGSLIST, INC.

BEFORE THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME, TERRORISM AND HOMELAND SECURITY
HEARING ON DOMESTIC MINOR SEX TRAFFICKING
SEPTEMBER 15, 2010

Thank you Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Gohmert, and Subcommittee Members. My name is William Clinton Powell, and I am craigslist's Director of Customer Service and Law Enforcement Relations. I have served as craigslist's primary liaison with law enforcement since I joined craigslist in April, 2004.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify today. I know that Jim Buckmaster and Craig Newmark were invited initially. Given the short notice, Jim was not available to travel to Washington to testify today. Craig is focused primarily on his role as a member of my customer service team, and has not been involved in the day-to-day management of the company for nearly ten years.

Background on craigslist

craigslist provides local online classifieds and discussion forums used by 60 million Americans each month. craigslist users post and respond to ads to help them find basic necessities in their everyday lives, including jobs, housing, second hand items, local services, personal relationships, event listings, and community information. Today, craigslist is far and away the leading classified advertising service used in the United States.

Until very recently, craigslist included an adult services category. It was added to craigslist in 2001, at the request of craigslist users tired of seeing adult services ads mixed into the personals categories. They wanted a separate category for such ads, similar to what yellow pages, newspapers, and other advertising venues have done for decades. Working collaboratively with Attorneys General, law enforcement, prominent NGOs, and other concerned parties, craigslist has developed industry-leading best practices for adult services ads, including the following:

- educating and encouraging users to report suspected trafficking and exploitation;
- prominently featuring law enforcement contacts and reporting hotlines;
- creating specialized victim search interfaces for law enforcement agencies;
- actively participating in the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) CyberTipline program;
- leading all awareness efforts for the National Trafficking Hotline;
- implementing a wide variety of technical screening and filtering measures;
- manually reviewing every adult service ad (both text and image) prior to posting;
- requiring phone verification for every adult service ad;
- credit card authorization and a fee to post each adult service ad;
- implementing the PICS content labeling system; and
- meeting regularly with experts at nonprofits and in law enforcement.

To our knowledge no other venue has adopted these best practices, and in fact very few venues have adopted more than one of these measures. Indeed, craigslist has been one of the few bright spots and success stories in the critical fight against trafficking and child exploitation. We've been told as much by experts on the front lines, many of whom we have met with in person, gathering helpful suggestions we have incorporated in our approach. Even our critics grudgingly

admit that we made giant strides, and that craigslist has been virtually alone among the many advertising venues carrying adult ads in vigorously combating exploitation and trafficking.

Cooperation with Law Enforcement and NCMEC

craigslist facilitates billions of human interactions each month, many of them face-to-face, among tens of millions of US users, nearly all of whom are well-intentioned law-abiding citizens seeking legitimate ends. The incidence of crime relating to use of craigslist is extremely low. However, despite craigslist's best efforts, it is not and cannot be zero, and any incidence of crime across tens of millions of people will generate enough crime stories to keep the newspapers, who compete with us in the classifieds business, busy reporting. When craigslist is misused for illegal activity, we assist law enforcement in their investigations, a role we have always excelled at.

craigslist is known among Internet companies for being "law enforcement friendly," and has a long history of close cooperation with law enforcement. For example, with respect to the subject matter for today's hearing:

- We pride ourselves on our responsiveness to law enforcement requests for information. Our goal is to turn around law enforcement inquiries within one business day, rather than the typically much longer interval at other Internet companies. I have personally been told many times by law enforcement agents that craigslist is by far the most responsive Internet company that they deal with. Indeed, we receive these compliments both verbally and in email correspondence on a regular basis.
- We participate actively in the NCMEC CyberTipline program, immediately reporting ads that meet NCMEC's reporting guidelines. Moreover, we have been advised by NCMEC that we are the *only* such participant making direct reports among countless venues that carry adult service ads. We have also provided prominent links on craigslist encouraging our users to report any suspicious activity to NCMEC.
- We assist anti-trafficking "sweeps" by the FBI, and have been credited by FBI agents with helping make those sweeps successful. As an example, in February 2009, craigslist was thanked by the FBI for our role in a very successful FBI nationwide sweep that resulted in the rescue of 48 minors.
- We have engineered special tools to facilitate the work of NCMEC and law enforcement.
 These include the creation of multiple special search interfaces that enable NCMEC and law enforcement to search for missing children across all craigslist sites.
- Our CEO, Jim Buckmaster, traveled to Washington DC in 2008 to meet with NCMEC (and members of the FBI assigned to NCMEC) so as to learn how to better work together. In July of this year, I accompanied Jim on another visit to NCMEC to exchange notes with staff there, and discuss how we could further coordinate our efforts.

Reporting Ads to NCMEC

Beginning in May 2009 craigslist commenced manual pre-screening all adult services ads. This enabled our reviewers (all of whom are practicing US attorneys) to reject ads that did not comply with our posting standards, standards much stricter than those typically applied by telephone yellow pages or newspapers, let alone online venues where such standards are largely absent. It also enabled our reviewers to report ads to NCMEC that corresponded to their reporting categories. Ads reported to NCMEC were of course rejected, and the accounts of the persons posting the ads were blocked. In July 2010 when Jim Buckmaster and I visited NCMEC, we asked representatives of NCMEC to comment on whether they felt we were applying appropriate standards in making these reports, and were told they believed our reviewers were reporting appropriately. In fact, they said that of the thousands of venues hosting adult services ads, craigslist was the only company participating in the CyberTipline program.

Working with NGOs

In the past year, my role at craigslist expanded to include some involvement in craigslist's outreach to various NGOs.

- Along with representatives of other prominent Internet companies, we have participated in a series of ongoing meetings with the DNA Foundation (founded by Demi Moore and Ashton Kutcher) and continue to work with this group.
- craigslist has actively engaged with prominent NGOs that work with victims of trafficking. Beyond financial support, craigslist has met with NGOs in recent months to determine how best to use the craigslist adult services platform to address relevant audiences with targeted messaging. For example, in collaboration with SAGE (Standing Against Global Exploitation), and MISSEY (Motivating, Inspiring, Supporting and Serving Exploited Youth), we were preparing a campaign aimed at helping potential trafficking victims access available social services, as well as intensive messaging campaigns designed to moderate societal demand for sexually exploited persons.

Meeting at the White House

In July 2010, Jim Buckmaster and I met at the White House with relevant Advisors, as well as representatives of the Justice Department and the office of the Vice President. The meeting was intended as an introduction and we left with the consensus of all present that craigslist's best practices for managing adult services advertising could be used as a model for the countless other venues that currently host unmoderated adult content, do not assist law enforcement, and do not engage in best practices generally speaking.

Conclusion

As of September 3, 2010 craigslist has terminated its adult services section. Those who formerly posted adult services ads on craigslist will now advertise at countless other venues. It is our sincere hope that law enforcement and advocacy groups will find helpful partners there.