

STATEMENT OF HOAN TON-THAT BEFORE THE MASSACHUSETTS SPECIAL COMMISSION ON FACIAL RECOGNITION

July 30, 2021

Good morning. My name is Hoan Ton-That, co-founder and CEO of Clearview AI. I would like to thank the legislators who had the foresight to establish this Commission to examine the issue of facial recognition. And I applaud the work of the Commissioners here today for your good faith efforts to recommend sound public policy.

At Clearview AI, we are committed to ensuring our technology is used responsibly. In fact, we believe that the structures we have put in place could help contribute to a model for the use of facial recognition technology across the nation.

Clearview AI is a facial recognition search engine, used by over 3,100 law enforcement agencies around the United States. It works just like Google, but instead of searching words, it searches photos of faces. All the data inside Clearview AI is publicly available, as it is with Google.

Clearview AI's bias-free algorithm can accurately find any face out of over three billion images it has collected from the public internet. It is used by law enforcement to solve crimes, including financial fraud, human trafficking, and crimes against children.

I'd like to present some stories showcasing the social good facial recognition technology has already provided. I'd also like to show the Commission our safeguards we have implemented in our software to help prevent abuse.

Homeland Security Investigations was trying to track down a child rapist who was selling abuse videos of a 6-year-old girl online. In the child abuse video being sold online, the only clue was an adult face appeared briefly in the background. They had tried other facial recognition software that only searched mugshots and DMV records, with no success.

Clearview AI was able to find a photo of a matching face in the background of someone's social media post at a bodybuilding convention. There was no name attached to this person in the background, however, with further investigative work, they were able to identify him as Andres Viola, an Argentine citizen.

He was arrested shortly afterwards and is now serving 35 years in jail, and they were able to rescue the 6-year-old girl in his possession. Erin Burke at Homeland Security Investigations has said that "without Clearview AI, they would have never found that guy."

We have learned that the FBI has tripled their rate of identifying victims of child abuse and child rape with Clearview AI. When a child rapist is arrested, there are hundreds of unidentified photos of abused children on the hard drives of these child rapists and no way to identify who they are.

For the first time, investigators are able to search those victims faces through Clearview AI and find the victims in publicly posted school photos or social media posts. Tripling the rate of identifying victims of child rape has been a huge breakthrough to tracking down the child rapists and stopping these abuses from happening.

On January 6th, Clearview AI's technology was essential to the quick and instant identification of the Capitol Rioters.

Any ban on facial recognition will be devastating for victims of child rape and human trafficking. Likewise, limiting the dataset law enforcement can use to DMV photos or mugshots will prevent victims of child exploitation from being rescued, as children are not in DMV databases. It would have also let Andres Viola continue to abuse that 6-year-old girl, as he is an Argentine citizen, and didn't appear in any existing law enforcement database. Finally, banning facial recognition would mean that the perpetrators of the crimes on January 6th could have evaded law enforcement.

Facial recognition technology has made immense improvements in accuracy over the last few years. We have also implemented many safeguards as a software vendor to help prevent any abuse of the technology.

First, every law enforcement officer that uses Clearview AI must type in the crime type and case number before conducting a search. Each law enforcement agency must also assign an administrator that conducts audits to ensure that every search is for a legitimate purpose.

Second, we provide training on the responsible use of facial recognition to our customers. Every customer is instructed that facial recognition search results from Clearview AI should never be the sole source of an arrest. We have removed any "percentage match" scoring from our software, ensuring that there's always human review.

Third, we've ensured our algorithm is as bias-free as possible. We have made sure that our neural network algorithm is trained with data across all demographic groups and we are confident to say that our algorithm is much more accurate than the human eye across age, gender, and race. As a person of mixed race, having an unbiased algorithm is important to me.

Our technology platform has been used by over 3,100 agencies in the United States, yet to the best of our knowledge, not one false arrest has been made due to our technology. One false arrest is one too many, and one child being abused is one too many.

We are committed to the responsible use of this new technology, and look forward to continuing the conversation on the appropriate regulations around this technology.

Thank you again for your time.



HOAN TON-THAT
CEO & Co-Founder