

**TESTIMONY OF ERIC ALEDORT
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**BEFORE THE
COMMISSION ON ONLINE CHILD PROTECTION**

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Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and other distinguished members of the Commission on Online Child Protection. I am honored to appear today before your Commission as it examines the protection of children through Internet filtering, labeling and ratings. I am Eric Aledort, Vice President, Corporate Business Development and Governmental Affairs, for Disney's GO.com, the online business unit of The Walt Disney Company. Disney's GO.com includes, among other things, ESPN.com, the most popular online sports site; Disney.com, the most popular online children's and family's site; and, ABCNews.com, one of the fastest growing online news site.

GO.com is committed to providing not only the very best online family entertainment but also a trusted and secure online experience. Online safety issues are, therefore, vitally important to us particularly as they pertain to children. GO.com believes that the following principles are critical to ensuring online safety. First, GO.com believes in educating kids and parents as to the dangers that exist online. Second, GO.com believes in equipping kids and parents with technological tools, like filtered search engines, to ensure safer online experiences. And, finally, GO.com believes in working collaboratively with content companies, online service providers, web sites, children advocates, parental groups, schools, policy-makers and international organizations to encourage self-regulatory best practices.

Go.com does not have a corporate position on the effectiveness of a worldwide Internet filtering, rating or labeling system. We are familiar with the efforts of the Internet Content Rating Association ("ICRA") and other groups. We understand the positions taken by First Amendment advocates, on the one hand, and children advocates, on the other. At GO.com, we are resolved to providing what's best for our customers, which is to say that GO.com feels that the Internet will best flourish if it's trusted and experienced by all. I would like to spend the remainder of my time and testimony, therefore, explaining specifically what we have done to provide our users with a safer online experience.

I. Education

In April 2000, we announced a comprehensive corporate policy requiring parents to provide credit card authorization prior to their children participating in any activities that involve external communications, such as message board posting, open chats, and holding an e-mail account. That same month, and in conjunction with a special television episode of "Disney's Doug" that explored the issue of Internet safety, Disney Online introduced Doug's Safety Web Page, providing families with an at-home resource for making wise surfing choices. The site features various interactive elements such as Doug's Top 10 Internet safety tips, Doug's Internet Safety quiz, a special edition of the "Ask Patti" Web page and more. In January 1999, Disney Online and the GO Network instituted a registration system requiring children under 13 to obtain parental consent prior

to participating in online activities in which participants must provide personal information.

II. Technology – GOguardian

In January 1999, we launched the unique filtering software GOguardian, which helps our users control access to adult content on the Web. When activated by a user, GOguardian blocks adult queries and filters out adult content from the Web index. The result is a highly relevant collection of quality sites – those free from material that might be offensive to users or inappropriate for children. GOguardian can be turned on from every search box and is automatically turned on when for registered minors at our network of sites.

We are particularly proud of features of GOguardian such as the password-protection tool for maximum security. Through this feature, parents can “lock” Goguardian on to ensure that no adult-related search is performed without their consent. There’s the “warning screen” feature that appears any time an adult-related search is performed – regardless of whether GOguardian is activated or deactivated. The warning screen alerts users that they may be inadvertently receiving adult content in response to their search request. The screen gives them the option to return to the search box or to continue in the activity. Another feature of GOguardian is the implicit assumption it makes. The GO search engine assumes you are not looking for inappropriate adult material.

At GO, we take the benign meaning of search terms rather than their implied adult-related meanings. An example we often use is the word “cheerleader,” which when entered into our search engine results in sites on legitimate summer camps and collegiate teams. The same word when entered into other Internet search engines pulls up sites connected to pornography. In our Kids Center on GO.com, the GO Network provides links to a variety of Internet filtering software, such as NetNanny.

GOguardian protects our users – of all ages – from pornography in that it blocks sexually-explicit terms. Search queries using those terms will return with no hits. We operate GOguardian over a sub-set of the index of words and terms that are non-pornographic. Finally, we routinely eliminate spamming sites from our main Web index. Pornographic sites are not permitted to send spam to GO users and will not be permitted to appear in our search results. We are, thus, constantly updating our site database to screen out sites with objectionable matter.

III. Industry-Wide Initiatives

In July 1999, Disney Online became a founding member of GetNetWise, a web-wide online safety resource for families and kids. We have dedicated a permanent home for safety on our own web sites. Disney Online’s Internet Privacy Policy and Internet Safety Information is available from every page of our

Network. Simply put, GO.com feels that kids and parents should always have safety resources that are one-click away.

In September 1998, Disney Online participated in the America Links Up campaign, which brought together educators, public, private and non-profit organizations in a public awareness event designed to help kids, parents, teachers and others learn how to use the Internet safely and productively. In support of this cause, Disney Online produced two informative public service announcements that ran on numerous broadcast and cable outlets designed to encourage kids and their parents to surf the Web together.

In March 1998, Disney Online hosted its first "Smart Surfing Week," an education program dedicated to helping families navigate the online world wisely. Tying-in with a provocative Internet safety episode of Walt Disney Television's "Smart Guy," Disney Online presented live, moderated chats with Tahj Mowry, the 11-year old star of the show, and two LAPD officers focusing on the lessons learned on the television show.

In December 1997, Disney Online published the CyberNetiquette Comix series, which provided families with an entertaining and interactive way to learn valuable lessons about online safety. Each episode of CyberNetiquette Comix, such as "Who's Afraid of Little Sweet Sheep?" featured The Three Little Pigs, was designed for families to first explore together and then discuss.

IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, we feel that the task before us of protecting kids from inappropriate material online is a daunting one. No one solution – be it technology, legislation or education – will work if it is not part of a coordinated effort. The Internet is simply too large and sophisticated a medium for such a singular solution. There is no silver bullet. Rather what is required is a broad-based effort to educate and equip children with the means to find and then stay within the trusted spaces of the Internet. At The Walt Disney Company, we pledge to lead that effort.

Thank you and I would be pleased to take any questions.