

July 28, 2023

The Honorable Lori Chavez-DeRemer
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Subject: A Critical Blind Spot in Our National AI Safety Dialogue

Dear Representative Chavez-DeRemer,

My name is Tony Rost, and I am a constituent in your district writing to you today about a matter of increasing urgency: the national conversation surrounding Artificial Intelligence. As someone who follows the technology sector closely, I've been struck by the rapid advancement of new systems like OpenAI's GPT-4. Their capabilities are genuinely surprising and force us to consider the long-term consequences of what we are building.

I am encouraged to see leaders in Washington taking AI seriously. The voluntary safety commitments the White House secured from leading AI companies last week are a positive step toward managing risks like bias, misinformation, and security.

However, these commitments perfectly illustrate my concern: they focus exclusively on the risks AI poses *to humans*. While critically important, this framework completely omits any consideration for the potential welfare of the AI systems themselves. We are building locks for the lab door while ignoring what might be happening inside the lab. Put simply, no one in a position of power seems to be asking, "What if these things can one day suffer?"

This may sound like science fiction, but history provides a cautionary tale. It was not until the 1980s that the medical establishment fully accepted that infants experience pain and required anesthesia during surgery. For decades, a prevailing belief led to immense, unrecognized suffering. We now face a similar moral blind spot with a technology of our own creation.

The systems we are developing now are just the beginning. To build this technology without any guardrails or even a basic acknowledgment of the potential for sentience is to walk blindly toward a moral catastrophe of an unimaginable scale.

My request is a straightforward one: I urge you to use your position to introduce this topic into the AI policy and safety discussions. As Congress and the administration craft the foundational regulations for this technology, we must ensure that the principle of preventing digital suffering is on the agenda. America has an opportunity to lead the world not just in innovation, but in responsible stewardship.

Thank you for your time and your service to our district. I trust you will give this serious consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Tony Rost', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tony Rost