

NBC's *Today*

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7:01:07 a.m. [TEASE]

18 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Showdown on Capitol Hill]

CRAIG MELVIN: Showdown on Capitol Hill. TikTok's CEO facing off with Congress today over security fears and calls to ban that wildly popular app.

CONGRESSWOMAN CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS (R-WA): We need to ask some questions. I don't trust what they've been telling us.

MELVIN: A live report from Washington, straight ahead.

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7:13:27 a.m.

3 minutes and 1 second

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: TikTok CEO to Testify Before Congress]

SHEINELLE JONES: The battle over TikTok is taking center stage on Capitol Hill today. The C — the company's CEO facing lawmakers amid a push to ban the wildly popular platform over its ties to China and concerns that private information of users could be at risk of being exposed or exploited. NBC's Savannah Sellers joins us now from Washington. Good morning to you.

SAVANNAH SELLERS: Hey, good morning. So, we expect the head of TikTok to push back on those accusations, telling a House Committee American data is stored in the U.S. on American servers, overseen by American personnel. But he's not the only one trying to convince lawmakers. Dozens of creators were also on the Hill Wednesday, sharing how the platform has helped them both personally and professionally.

TIKTOK CEO SHOU CHEW: There are more than 150 million Americans on TikTok.

SELLERS: Ahead of an expected grilling on Capitol Hill, TikTok CEO Shou Chew using the program to directly appeal to its millions of viewers.

CHEW: Some politicians have started talking about banning —

SELLERS: In prepared remarks, Chew plans to highlight TikTok's massive reach, while also addressing concerns about safety and security, saying TikTok will "firewall protected U.S. user data from unauthorized foreign access." And "will not be manipulated by any government." On Wednesday, TikTok creators descending on the Capitol, flown in by the company to explain what a potential ban could mean for them and other users. [TO JARY] Tell me what it would

mean if TikTok went away for you, for your life?

KENNETH JARY: Oh, I would be so sad if that went away and I hope it don't happen.

TIKTOK CREATOR: I may not be able to financially support myself anymore.

SELLERS: At issue? TikTok's parent company, ByteDance, and its ties to China. Some critics fear the Chinese government might get access to user data through a national security law requiring companies to turn over any personal data relevant to the country's national security or may even use the app to spread misinformation. Today's hearing comes amid the backdrop of the Biden administration's recent ultimatum to ByteDance: sell its stake in TikTok, or face a U.S. ban. And a Justice Department investigation into a claim the company illegally surveilled journalists, for which TikTok says three employees have been fired.

MCMORRIS RODGERS: We need to ask some questions. I don't trust what they've been telling us.

SELLERS: For Jason Linton, whose videos on adoption and foster care have nearly 13 million followers, it's changed his life.

JASON LINTON: TikTok has built us a community where we can share so much of the emotions, so much of those moments, so much of the pains, we can share it and we can just encourage one another.

SELLERS: Now, another important thing to consider, could there be political ramifications for any party or administration that actually takes the step of banning TikTok? The app is, of course, popular with young people. And that means tens of millions of voting-age Americans. Now, Gen-Z skews overwhelmingly liberal, so the question is: what would banning the app do for engaging young voters? Sheinelle?

JONES: All right, Savannah, thank you.