

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS  
**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE  
2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927  
Minority (202) 225-3641

May 27, 2021

Mr. Mark Zuckerberg  
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer  
Facebook  
1 Hacker Way  
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Dear Mr. Zuckerberg:

Pursuant to Rules X and XI of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Committee is investigating the response to the coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. As part of this inquiry, we are continuing to examine false and misleading information regarding COVID-19 on platforms such as yours. The Committee is writing in follow-up to our July 2020 and February 2021 letters requesting further information regarding reports of rampant COVID-19 disinformation on Facebook and other platforms, as well as your recent testimony at our Joint Subcommittee Hearing entitled “Disinformation Nation: Social Media’s Role in Promoting Extremism and Misinformation” on March 25, 2021.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr., Chairman, Rep. Diana DeGette, Chair, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation, Rep. Michael F. Doyle, Chairman, Subcommittee on Communications and Technology, and Rep. Janice D. Schakowsky, Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce, House Committee on Energy and Commerce, to Mark Zuckerberg, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Facebook (July 8, 2020); Letter from Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr., Chairman, Rep. Diana DeGette, Chair, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation, Rep. Michael F. Doyle, Chairman, Subcommittee on Communications and Technology, and Rep. Janice D. Schakowsky, Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce, House Committee on Energy and Commerce, to Mark Zuckerberg, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Facebook (Feb. 23, 2021); House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittees on Communications and Technology and Consumer Protection and Commerce, Testimony of Mark Zuckerberg, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Facebook, *Hearing on Disinformation Nation: Social Media’s Role in Promoting Extremism and Misinformation*, 117th Cong. (Mar. 25, 2021).

The Committee has repeatedly raised concerns regarding the role your company plays in the spread of COVID-19 misinformation, including during our Committee hearing yesterday in which the effects of COVID-19 misinformation on vaccine confidence were discussed.<sup>2</sup> Earlier this year, during our March 25 hearing, Members referenced a report identifying 12 superspreaders of vaccine disinformation online.<sup>3</sup> The report found that the “Disinformation Dozen” was responsible for 65 percent of the publicly available anti-vaccine content on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout the hearing and in Facebook’s prior submissions to the Committee, you have referenced Facebook’s policy against misinformation. Specifically, in your hearing testimony, you stated that Facebook is “focused on removing misinformation on Facebook and Instagram about COVID-19 and vaccines,” and that “accounts on Facebook and Instagram that repeatedly share these debunked claims may be removed altogether.”<sup>5</sup>

Despite these assurances, a recent study from the Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH) and Anti-Vax Watch (the “CCDH April 2021 Report”) found, in the month since our hearing, that the Disinformation Dozen have posted at least 105 pieces of content that violate platform service agreements for Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter. This content generated up to 29 million potential impressions from the existing followers of the Disinformation Dozen accounts.<sup>6</sup> The report further found that, of these 12 individuals, at least nine continue to have active accounts on Facebook and Instagram.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Id.*; House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, *Hearing on A Shot at Normalcy: Building Vaccine COVID-19 Confidence*, 117th Cong. (May 26, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittees on Communications and Technology and Consumer Protection and Commerce, *Hearing on Disinformation Nation: Social Media’s Role in Promoting Extremism and Misinformation*, 117th Cong. (Mar. 25, 2021); Center for Countering Digital Hate, *The Disinformation Dozen: Why Platforms Must Act on Twelve Leading Online Anti-Vaxxers* (Mar. 24, 2021).

<sup>4</sup> Center for Countering Digital Hate, *The Disinformation Dozen: Why Platforms Must Act on Twelve Leading Online Anti-Vaxxers* (Mar. 24, 2021).

<sup>5</sup> House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittees on Communications and Technology and Consumer Protection and Commerce, Testimony of Mark Zuckerberg, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Facebook, *Hearing on Disinformation Nation: Social Media’s Role in Promoting Extremism and Misinformation*, 117th Cong. (Mar. 25, 2021).

<sup>6</sup> Center for Countering Digital Hate, *The Disinformation Dozen: The Sequel* (Apr. 28, 2021).

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

Accordingly, the Committee requests a briefing from your company by June 10, 2021, regarding the actions it has taken to monitor and review the content posted by the Disinformation Dozen on its platforms, and whether such content violates the terms of service. During the briefing, we expect Facebook to address what steps it has taken to remove the vaccine misinformation identified in the CCDH April 28, 2021 Report.

In addition, to better understand Facebook's actions to curb vaccine misinformation and disinformation, the Committee requests you provide the following information by June 10, 2021:

1. Updated responses to the requests in our February 2, 2021 letter to account for any actions, policy updates, or other relevant activities undertaken by Facebook since your February 18, 2020 response to the Committee.
2. A description of the actions taken by Facebook and Instagram since publication of the CCDH and Anti-Vax Watch's March 24, 2021 report entitled *The Disinformation Dozen*<sup>8</sup> to:
  - a. Identify all accounts controlled by the Disinformation Dozen; and
  - b. Review the content posted by such accounts to ensure it is in compliance with Facebook or Instagram's policies against COVID-19 and vaccine misinformation.
3. A summary of enforcement-related actions taken, and determinations made, by Facebook or Instagram in relation to content posted by the Disinformation Dozen.

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<sup>8</sup> Center for Countering Digital Hate, *The Disinformation Dozen: Why Platforms Must Act on Twelve Leading Online Anti-Vaxxers* (Mar. 24, 2021).

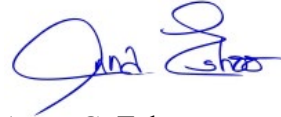
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Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. If you have any questions, and to schedule the briefing, please contact Rebekah Jones, Lisa Goldman, and Gerald Leverich with the Majority staff at (202) 225-2927.

Sincerely,



Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Chairman




Anna G. Eshoo  
Chairwoman  
Subcommittee on Health



Diana DeGette  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Oversight  
and Investigations



Mike Doyle  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Communications  
and Technology



Jan Schakowsky  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection  
and Commerce