

ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH 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

July 8, 2020

Mr. Sundar Pichai
Chief Executive Officer
Google
1600 Amphitheatre Parkway
Mountain View, CA 94043

Dear Mr. Pichai:

Pursuant to Rules X and XI of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Committee on Energy and Commerce is writing to request information on Google's response to disinformation regarding the coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Over the past several months, we have seen a troubling rise of false or misleading information related to COVID-19 disseminated by domestic and foreign actors on platforms such as yours.¹ This disinformation has ranged from false statements about certain groups being immune from contracting the virus to unsubstantiated assertions about masks and vaccines.² This type of disinformation is dangerous and can affect the health and well-being of people who use this false information to make critical health decisions during this pandemic.³

In June 2020, in an effort to increase transparency and accountability, the European Commission requested that certain companies produce monthly reports detailing actions they

¹ *How COVID-19 Misinformation is Still Going Viral*, CNN (May 9, 2020); House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Testimony of Hany Farid, Ph.D., Professor, University of California, Berkeley, *Joint Hearing on A Country in Crisis: How Disinformation Online is Dividing the Nation*, 116th Cong. (June 24, 2020); *Twitter Takes Down China-Linked Accounts Spreading Disinformation on Hong Kong and Coronavirus*, CNBC (June 12, 2020); *Misinformation about Coronavirus Finds New Avenues on Unexpected Sites*, Washington Post (May 20, 2020).

² *Social Media Platforms are Profiting from COVID-19 Misinformation: Nancy Pelosi*, ABC News (June 16, 2020); *Virus Conspiracists Elevate a New Champion*, New York Times (May 9, 2020); *How the 'Plandemic' Movie and its Falsehoods Spread Widely Online*, New York Times (May 20, 2020); *Surge of Virus Misinformation Stumps Facebook and Twitter*, New York Times (Mar. 8, 2020).

³ *Get Ready for a Vaccine Information War*, New York Times (May 13, 2020).

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have taken to address COVID-19 disinformation on their platforms.⁴ According to news reports, Google has agreed to produce these reports to the European Commission.⁵

The Committee agrees that further transparency is needed to better understand both the scope of disinformation occurring on platforms and the actions that are being taken to curtail this problem. During a hearing the Committee held last month, we learned that dangerous disinformation regarding COVID-19 persists and platforms can and should do more to stem this ongoing and dangerous problem.⁶

Given the Committee's jurisdiction over consumer protection and its ongoing oversight efforts around COVID-19 disinformation, we request that your company provide the Committee with monthly reports similar in scope to what you are providing the European Commission regarding your COVID-19 disinformation efforts as they relate to United States users of your platform. In addition, we request your company brief Committee staff by July 22, 2020, to discuss the type and form of information Google plans to produce in these reports and to further describe the efforts currently underway to combat COVID-19 disinformation on your platform.

⁴ The European Commission, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Tackling COVID-19 Disinformation – Getting the Facts Right* (June 10, 2020) (eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020JC0008&from=EN).

⁵ *Google, Facebook, and Twitter to Produce Regular Reports on Coronavirus Disinformation for the EU*, The Verge (June 11, 2020).

⁶ House Committee on Energy and Commerce, *Joint Hearing on A Country in Crisis: How Disinformation Online is Dividing the Nation*, 116th Cong. (June 24, 2020).

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

Sincerely,



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman



Diana DeGette

Chair

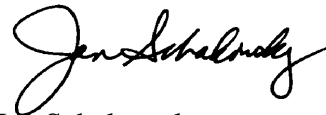
Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations



Mike Doyle

Chairman

Subcommittee on Communications
and Technology



Jan Schakowsky

Chair

Subcommittee on Consumer Protection
and Commerce