

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

April 6, 2023

Mr. Samuel Levine  
Director, Bureau of Consumer Protection  
Federal Trade Commission  
600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20580

Dear Director Levine,

We write to express our deep concerns about hate, harassment, and extremism in online games, and the negative impact it has on consumers.

A report by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) found 86% of adult online gamers reported experiencing some form of harassment in 2022. Of these respondents, 77% reported experiencing severe harassment, including physical threats, sexual harassment, and stalking. The figures for youth (ages 10-17) were even more concerning - more than 67% of young people reported experiencing harassment. The report also found that over 20% of adult gamers and 15% of youth gamers were exposed to white-supremacist ideologies while playing online games.<sup>1</sup>

Another report released March 28, 2023 by the ADL focused on the challenges faced by trust and safety employees moderating hate, harassment, and extremism in the games industry. It found that a lack of resources has further complicated efforts for trust and safety teams on the front lines of protecting consumers. Notably, the report highlights industry executives' lack of understanding of the workload and appreciation for the critical work of these employees.<sup>2</sup> Given these findings, we are concerned that industry executives are not taking trust and safety issues seriously on their platforms.

Late last year, the FTC took action to hold video games accountable for violating the rights of users. As you know, the Commission imposed a \$275 million penalty against Epic Games after it was found to have violated the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act and utilized dark patterns to trick users into making unwanted purchases. Epic allowed these actions to continue to take place on Fortnite, despite over one million user complaints and internal employee outreach expressing concerns, especially about Fortnite's default settings, which employees reported opened the door for harassment of younger users.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See ADL Center for Technology and Society, *Hate Is No Game: Hate and Harassment in Online Games 2022*, ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE (Dec. 6, 2022), <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/hate-no-game-hate-and-harassment-online-games-2022>.

<sup>2</sup> ADL Center for Technology and Society, *Caught in a Vicious Cycle: Obstacles and Opportunities for Trust and Safety Teams in the Games Industry*, ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE (Mar. 28, 2023), <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/caught-vicious-cycle-obstacles-and-opportunities-trust-and-safety-teams-games>.

As the agency responsible for protecting consumer rights and safety, we request the FTC provide a written response within 30 days of receiving this letter, outlining the actions the Commission is taking to mitigate hate, harassment, and extremism in online games, and what legislative solutions Congress could provide to enable the Commission to better address these issues.

Online gaming should be an enjoyable and safe experience for all players, and no one, especially young people, should be subjected to discrimination or abuse.

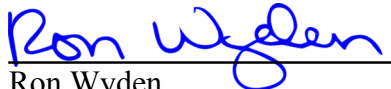
Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



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Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress



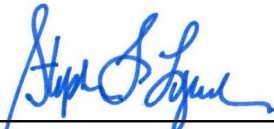
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Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



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Katie Porter  
Member of Congress



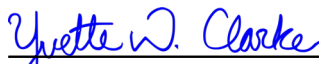
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Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress



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Adam B. Schiff  
Member of Congress



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Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress

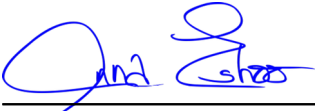


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Marc A. Veasey  
Member of Congress

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<sup>3</sup> *Fortnite Video Game Maker Epic Games to Pay More Than Half a Billion Dollars over FTC Allegations of Privacy Violations and Unwanted Charges*, FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION (Dec. 19, 2022), <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2022/12/fortnite-video-game-maker-epic-games-pay-more-half-billion-dollars-over-ftc-allegations>.



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Anna G. Eshoo  
Member of Congress



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Ann McLane Kuster  
Member of Congress



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Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress