

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

December 8, 2023

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

Mr. Adam Mosseri  
Head  
Instagram  
1 Hacker Way  
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Dear Mr. Zuckerberg and Mr. Mosseri,

We are deeply concerned by reports indicating that Meta and Instagram steer users toward sexualized videos through associations with children and that the platform runs ads alongside such content without advertisers' knowledge and in violation of their policies. Recent *Wall Street Journal* reporting revealed that, despite warnings from Meta's own safety experts, Meta launched the "Reels" feature without recommended safeguards to prevent sexualized content from being promoted and monetized.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, test accounts, created to follow child gymnasts, cheerleaders, and influencers on Instagram, were shown monetized sexualized content. This is highly disturbing and suggests that Meta's algorithms serve the prurient interests of pedophiles, and that Meta is aware of the practice and chooses to maximize their profits while turning a blind eye to the harm caused by sexualizing children.

It appears as if measures to address these harms were considered but not implemented by Meta and Instagram so that the platform's profits would not suffer. Metrics that drive profits such as daily active users, attention time, and advertising revenue were held sacrosanct while children were used as bait to boost those metrics. Meta's former head of Youth Policy, described the chaining of youth content and sexualized content as so severe that he recommended "either we ramp up our content detection capabilities, or we don't recommend any minor content" on Reels.<sup>2</sup> In June, a comprehensive survey of Self-Generated-Child Sexual Abuse Material (SG-CSAM) accessibility across major social media platforms found that "Instagram appears to have a particularly severe problem with commercial SG-CSAM accounts, and many known CSAM keywords return results."<sup>3</sup> Meta's rejection of these

---

<sup>1</sup> The Wall Street Journal, "Instagram's Algorithm Delivers Toxic Video Mix to Adults Who Follow Children," Jeff Horwitz and Katherine Blunt, November 27, 2023, [https://www.wsj.com/tech/meta-instagram-video-algorithm-children-adult-sexual-content-72874155?st=2gj5\\_5kbh6nesghx&reflink=share\\_mobilewebshare](https://www.wsj.com/tech/meta-instagram-video-algorithm-children-adult-sexual-content-72874155?st=2gj5_5kbh6nesghx&reflink=share_mobilewebshare)

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> Stanford University, Internet Observatory Cyber Policy Center, "Cross-Platform Dynamics of Self-Generated CSAM," David Thiel, Renée DiResta and Alex Stamos <https://stacks.stanford.edu/file/druid:jd797tp7663/20230606>

recommendations and refusal to address these dangers demonstrates its determination to prioritize profits over safety on its platform.

Meta's crass monetization of sexualized content runs counter to the interests of advertisers who overwhelmingly do not want to be associated with that content.<sup>4</sup> Meta holds advertisers to a high standard, banning any sexualized, suggestive, or adult content in ads on Meta's platforms.<sup>5</sup> However, the *Journal's* reporting indicated that Meta is failing to enforce that policy, and also that brand name advertisers such as Bumble, Match, Walmart, Disney, and Pizza Hut continue to appear next to overtly sexual content on Instagram.

Furthermore, Meta's inefficiency and selectivity in responding to these concerns has again been demonstrated by the *Journal*, which found that Meta's content moderation contractors are not being adequately trained, that enforcement actions against objectionable groups and accounts are often not effective, and that Meta's own decisions about taking down groups and accounts related to child sexual abuse are "routinely inexplicable."<sup>6</sup>

These disturbing and intentional operational choices reveal Meta executive's willingness to sacrifice the safety and wellbeing of children in order to maximize profit no matter what. This is exactly why the FTC rightfully is seeking to eliminate Meta's ability to monetize youth data<sup>7</sup>, and why over 40 attorneys general, including those of Massachusetts<sup>8</sup> and Florida<sup>9</sup>, sued Meta for addicting and harming children and teens. Meta's frivolous lawsuit seeking to declare the FTC unconstitutional shows that the company would prefer to take the cops off the beat and destroy America's bedrock consumer protection agency so that they do not lose a dime rather than protect children online. We are extremely disappointed, but not surprised, by these developments, and ask that you answer the following questions no later than December 22:

---

[-sio-sg-csam-report.pdf](#)

<sup>4</sup> See Financial Times, "Online platforms and media tackle embarrassing advert placements," Patricia Nilsson, February 26, 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/8645e156-3ba2-11ea-b84f-a62c46f39bc2>, Reuters, "Exclusive: Brands blast Twitter for ads next to child pornography accounts," Sheila Dang and Katie Paul, September 28, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/technology/exclusive-brands-blast-twitter-ads-next-child-pornography-accounts-2022-09-28/>

<sup>5</sup> Facebook, "Adult Content | Transparency Center," <https://transparency.fb.com/policies/ad-standards/objectionable-content/adult-content>

<sup>6</sup> The Wall Street Journal, "Meta is Struggling to Boot Pedophiles Off Facebook and Instagram," Jeff Horwitz and Katherine Blunt, December 1, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/tech/meta-facebook-instagram-pedophiles-enforcement-struggles-dceb3548>

<sup>7</sup> Federal Trade Commission, "FTC Proposes Blanket Prohibition Preventing Facebook from Monetizing Youth Data," May 3, 2023, <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2023/05/ftc-proposes-blanket-prohibition-preventing-facebook-monetizing-youth-data>

<sup>8</sup> Office of the Attorney General of Massachusetts, "AG Campbell Files Lawsuit Against Meta, Instagram For Unfair and Deceptive Practices that Harm Young People," October 24, 2023, <https://www.mass.gov/news/ag-campbell-files-lawsuit-against-meta-instagram-for-unfair-and-deceptive-practices-that-harm-young-people>

<sup>9</sup> Office of the Attorney General of Florida, "Attorney General Moody Takes Legal Action Against Meta To Protect Children," October 24, 2023 <https://www.myfloridalegal.com/newsrelease/attorney-general-moody-takes-legal-action-against-meta-protect-children#:~:text=TALLAHASSEE%2C%20Fla.,purposefully%20addict%20children%20and%20teens.>

1. What safety assessments were performed on the Reels feature of Instagram before it was released?
  - a. Did any of those assessments focus on risks related to CSAM, sexualized content, child safety or brand safety?
  - b. Were any of those assessments performed by independent third parties?
  - c. What recommendations were made to increase the safety of the Reels feature, and were those recommendations adopted or accepted by Meta’s leadership? If not, for what reason were those recommendations not accepted?
2. Of the actions detailed in the recent blog post entitled “Our Work to Fight Online Predators,”<sup>10</sup>:
  - a. Which of them were explored or proposed before the introduction of Reels or before the recent press stories highlighting Instagram’s child safety failures?
  - b. Why was Reels launched without these child safety measures in place?
3. By Meta’s own estimates in the post, the new enforcement measures have resulted in over 4 million more reels actioned per month, and 16,000 additional groups and 250,000 additional devices actioned against since the summer. In addition, Meta claims that 500,000 additional accounts were disabled in August 2023 for violating child sexual exploitation policies.
  - a. How long were the newly disabled accounts, groups, and devices operating on Instagram until the enforcement actions were taken?
  - b. By Meta’s own estimates, how many reels should or would have been taken down under the new automated enforcement policies since the introduction of the Reels feature?
4. In the blog post, Meta mentioned that it “fixed technical issues, including an issue that unexpectedly closed user reports.” The *Journal*’s reporting also mentioned that the issue prevented “a substantial portion of user reports from being processed.”<sup>11</sup>
  - a. How long was the bug in place?
  - b. When did Meta first detect this bug? How long did Meta take to fix the issue after it was detected?
  - c. How many reports were closed by this bug? What percentage of total reports were closed by the bug?
  - d. How many of them related to adult content or child sexual abuse?
  - e. Has Meta reopened those users’ reports, and resumed acting on them?
5. Why do Instagram’s algorithms promote sexualized content to accounts that have not demonstrated an interest in such content, as the *Journal*’s reporting showed?
  - a. What topics do Instagram’s algorithms associate with sexualized content?
  - b. Do Instagram’s algorithms associate content related to children with sexualized content or promote sexualized content alongside content related to children, and if so, why did Meta not prevent that from happening?
  - c. Has Meta considered any technical measures to address the promotion of sexualized content on Instagram, and, if so, which of those measures have been adopted?
6. Does Meta enforce its policy banning adult content in ads on Instagram?
  - a. If so, how many ads on Instagram were rejected or not shown by Meta because of adult content?

---

<sup>10</sup> Meta, “Our Work to Fight Online Predators,” December 1, 2023 <https://about.fb.com/news/2023/12/combating-online-predators>

<sup>11</sup> Horwitz and Blunt, December 1, 2023

- b. How many ads were reported on Instagram because they contained adult content?
- 7. Does Meta respect the restrictions advertisers impose on the placement of their advertising?
  - a. Does Meta track violations of such restrictions?
  - b. How many times was an ad shown next to, preceding, or following, adult content on Instagram in violation of the advertiser's restriction?
  - c. What transparency do advertisers on Meta have regarding the content that their ads are shown alongside? Do advertisers have access to a random sample of content that their ads were used to monetize?
- 8. How much revenue has Meta received from selling ads next to adult content in violation of advertiser's preferences or from ads reported for containing adult content?

Sincerely,



---

Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress



---

Kathy Castor  
Member of Congress



---

DEBBIE DINGELL  
Member of Congress



---

Lisa Blunt Rochester  
Member of Congress



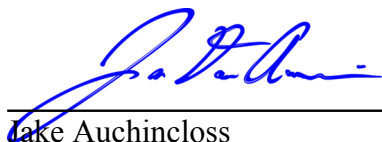
---

Adam B. Schiff  
Member of Congress



---

Sean Casten  
Member of Congress



---

Jake Auchincloss  
Member of Congress



---

Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



---

Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress