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PROTECTING KIDS ONLINE: INSTAGRAM AND REFORMS FOR YOUNG USERS

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION, PRODUCT SAFETY, AND DATA SECURITY

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

DECEMBER 8, 2021

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SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

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PROTECTING KIDS ONLINE: INSTAGRAM AND REFORMS FOR YOUNG USERS

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2021

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION, PRODUCT SAFETY, AND DATA SECURITY,
COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:40 p.m., in room SR–253, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Richard Blumenthal, Chairman of the Subcommittee, presiding.

Present: Senators Blumenthal [presiding], Cantwell, Klobuchar, Schatz, Markey, Baldwin, Luján, Thune, Cruz, Sullivan, Blackburn, Young, Lee, and Lummis.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, U.S. SENATOR FROM CONNETICUT

Senator BLUMENTHAL. [Technical problems.]—from social media to children and teens on social media. We really appreciate your being here, Mr. Mosseri. Your response to our invitation is very welcomed. I want to thank you and your team for your cooperation, and I want to thank the Ranking Member, Senator Blackburn, for being such a really close partner in this work, as well as our Chairwoman Maria Cantwell and our Ranking Member Roger Wicker for their support as well and all the members of our committee for being so engaged on this topic.

As a note to start, I understand Mr. Mosseri has a hard stop at five, so I am going to be strict on the 5-minute time limit. I know everybody thinks of me as a very nice guy, but I am going to be ruthless, at least attempting to be ruthless as best any Senator can be with his colleagues.

In this series of hearings we have heard some pretty powerful and compelling evidence about the dangers of big tech to children's health, well-being, and futures. Our Nation is in the midst of a teen mental health crisis. Social media didn't create it, but it certainly fanned the fuel and the flames, and it has fueled it. And if anybody has any doubts about the potential harmful effects of social media, the surgeon general yesterday issued a powerful report about the implications of social media, as well as video gaming and other technologies on teen mental health.

And that is part of the reason we are here. The hearings have shown that social media, in particular big tech actually fans those flames with addictive products and sophisticated algorithms that

can exploit and profit from children's insecurities and anxieties. And our mission now is to do something about it.

We are here to do more than shake fists. We really are seeking solutions. And we welcome the voices and the vision of big tech itself in that effort. I believe that the time for self-policing and self-regulation is over. Some of the big tech companies have said, trust us. That seems to be what Instagram is saying in your testimony. But self-policing depends on trust.

The trust is gone. What we need now is independent researchers, objective overseers not chosen by big tech but from outside, and strong, vigorous enforcement of standards that stop the destructive, toxic content that now too often is driven to kids and takes them down rabbit holes to dark places. The day before this hearing, Instagram announced a set of proposals. These simple time management and parental oversight tools should have, they could have, been announced years ago. They weren't.

And in fact, these changes fall way short of what we need, in my view. Many of them are still in testing, months away. Rollouts will be done at some point in the future, we don't know exactly when, and unfortunately, these announced changes leave parents and kids with no transparency into the black box algorithms. The 600 pound gorillas in those black boxes that drive that destructive and addictive content to children and teens. No effective warning or notice to parents when their children are spiraling into eating disorders, bullying, or self-harm.

Nothing more than the bare minimum controls for parents. And, of course, no real accountability to assure parents and kids that these safeguards will work. I am troubled with the lack of answers on Instagram Kids. Once again, this pause looks more like a public relations tactic brought on by our hearings, just as these announced changes seem to be brought on by these proceedings announced just hours before your testimony, and we need real serious review of those changes.

The magnitude of these problems requires bold and broad solutions and accountability, which has been lacking so far. Facebook's own researchers have been warning management, including yourself, Mr. Mosseri for years, about Instagram's harmful impacts on teens' mental health and wellbeing, and the whistleblower who sat exactly where you are told us about those documents, about the research, the studies, which showed that Facebook knew, it did the research, had the studies, but it continued to profit from the destructive content because it meant more eyeballs, more advertising, more dollars.

Given those warnings, it seems inexcusable that Facebook waited a decade to begin, and only to begin, figuring out that Instagram needed parental controls. In the past 2 months, this subcommittee has heard horrifying stories from countless parents whose lives and their children's lives have been changed forever. One father from Connecticut wrote to me about his daughter who developed severe anxiety in high school because of constant pressure from Instagram.

That pressure became so intense, following her home from school, following her everywhere she went, following her into her bedroom in the evening that she attempted suicide. Fortunately, her parents

stepped in and sought help and found a recovery program, but the experience continues to haunt her and her family. Facebook's researchers call this fall into that kind of dark rabbit hole a perfect storm, that is the quote, "perfect storm," created by its own algorithm that exacerbate downward spirals harmful to teens.

Again, Facebook knows about the harm, it has done the research, the studies, the surveys repeatedly, it knows the destructive consequences of the algorithms and designs, it knows teens struggle with addiction and depression on Instagram, but that data has been hidden like the algorithms themselves. Just yesterday, that surgeon general's report provided powerful documentation on how social media can fan those flames and fuel the fires of the mental health crisis that we face among teens, and it signals that something is terribly wrong. What really stuns me is the lack of action.

In fact, just within the last two months. Two months ago, this subcommittee heard testimony from Facebook's global head of safety, Ms. Antigone Davis. At that time, I showed her the pro-eating disorder rampant on Instagram, I demonstrated through an experiment how its algorithms will flood a teen with triggering and toxic messages in just hours after we created an account.

This was glorification of being dangerously underweight, tips on skipping meals, images we could not in good conscience show in this room. It has been 2 months, so we have repeated our experiment. On Monday, we created another fake account for a teenager and followed a few accounts promoting eating disorders. And again, within an hour, all of our recommendations promoted pro-anorexia and eating disorder content. Two months ago, the global head of public safety for Facebook was put on notice by this subcommittee. Nothing has changed. It is all still happening. And in the meantime, more lives have been broken, real lives, with real families and futures, and you hear from them yourself.

We all know that if Facebook saw a significant threat to its growth or ad revenue, it wouldn't wait 2 months to take action. So why does it take months for Facebook to act when our kids face danger, when time is not on our side? Time is not on our side. So no wonder parents are worried. In fact, parents are furious. They don't trust Instagram, Google, TikTok and all of their big tech peers.

And by the way, this is not an issue limited to Instagram or Facebook. Parents are asking, what is Congress doing to protect our kids? And the resounding bipartisan message from this committee is legislation is coming. We can't rely on trust anymore, we can't rely on self-policing. It is what parents, and our children are demanding. Senator Blackburn and I are listening to them, as are other members of committee. We are working together.

Your proposal for an industry body, as parents yet again, they trust us, we will do it ourselves. But self-regulation relies on that trust that has been squandered. We need to make sure that the responsibility is on big tech to put a safe product on the market. You can't be allowed to conceal when products are harming kids, so the first imperative is transparency. We need real transparency into these 800 pound gorilla black box algorithms and addictive designs, and disclosure has to include independent qualified researchers

who will then tell the story to the public. We need to update our children's privacy laws.

Congress should pass the bipartisan Children's and Teens Online Privacy Protection Act authored by Senator Markey, who is here today. I am proud to be working with him on updating and expanding it. Parents and children need more power and more effective tools to protect themselves on the platform.

And that is why Senator Blackburn and I are working on a framework, and we have made good progress to enable that protection. There really should be a duty of care. United Kingdom has imposed it. It is part of the law there. Why not here? That ought to be part of the framework of legislation that we are considering. Section 230 reform. You make reference to it in your testimony.

The days of absolute broad unique immunity for big tech are over. And finally, enforcement. State authorities, Federal authorities, law enforcement has to be rigorous and strong. So I hope that we will begin the effort of working together, but one way or the other, this committee will move forward. And again, I thank you for being here. I thank all of my colleagues for attending. And I ask for remarks by the Ranking Member Senator Blackburn.

STATEMENT OF HON. MARSHA BLACKBURN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM TENNESSEE

Senator BLACKBURN. And thank you, Senator Blumenthal. And welcome to everyone. We are appreciative that you are here today, Mr. Mosseri. We are grateful for your time and for your testimony. I do want to thank Senator Blumenthal and his team for the work. This is the fifth hearing that we have held dealing with the issues around big tech and the invasions of privacy, the lack of data security, the need for Section 230 reforms, and looking very directly at social media platforms, and the effect—the negative and adverse effect—that they are having on our children.

I will tell you that today I am just a little bit frustrated. I am frustrated because this is now the fourth time in the past 2 years that we have spoken with someone from Meta, as you are now calling yourselves, and I feel like the conversation continues to repeat itself ad nauseum.

And when I go back home to Tennessee, I know this the people there, lots of moms and dads and teachers and pediatricians, they share this frustration because they continue to hear from you that change is coming, that things are going to be different, that there are going to be more tools in the toolbox, that kids are going to be safer online, that privacy is going to be protected, and that data is going to be secure. But guess what? Nothing changes. Nothing. The chairman just talked about what happened with Ms. Davis when she came in and how we pointed all of this out specifically of what we had found. And yet yesterday, what happened? The exact same thing.

So I hope that you appreciate the frustration that the American public feels, that they appreciate what the Internet can do for them in bringing the world closer, but the applications that you are pushing forward, the social media, the addictive nature, the way this affects children, there is such a frustration that you turn a blind eye toward taking responsibility and accepting accountability

for your platform, how you are structured, and how you use the data on these children.

Yesterday, at 3 a.m., which is midnight in the Silicon Valley, you released a list of product updates that you said would raise the standard for protecting teens and supporting parents online. And I am not sure what hours you all keep in California, but where I am from, the middle of the night is when you drop news that you don't want people to see.

And maybe you thought that doing it in this manner would keep members of this subcommittee from seeing it right away and from raising concerns. Because while I am sure you know that we fully share the goal of protecting kids and teens online, what we aren't sure about is how the half measures you have introduced are going to get us to the point where we need to be to truly protect teens and young adults online. For example, we know that social media is an integral part of teens' daily lives.

According to the Mayo Clinic, 97 percent of teens between ages 13 and 17 use a social media platform, and 45 percent say they are online almost constantly. So while telling teens to take a break might seem helpful on the face of things, it's probably not going to get most teenagers to stop doing what they are doing and take a break. Educational tools for parents can be helpful, but frankly, I am more concerned about the things we know kids and teens are hiding from their parents.

We know that Facebook and Instagram have encouraged teens to use secondary accounts and told them to be authentic, and we all remember what it was like to be a teenager. So while parents might gain some insight into what their teens do on their main accounts, what do they do about the accounts they don't even know exist, the ones that Instagram is encouraging them to create?

And Instagram announced in July that it would default to all teens onto private accounts when they sign up for the site. Yet just yesterday, my team created an account as a 15-year-old girl and it defaulted to public. So, while Instagram is touting all these safety measures, they aren't even making sure that these safety measures are in effect. For me, this is a case of too little, too late, because now there is bipartisan momentum both here and in the House to tackle these problems we are seeing with big tech.

As Senator Blumenthal said, we are working on children's privacy, online privacy, data security, and Section 230 reforms. This is the appropriate time to pass a national consumer privacy bill, as well as kid specific legislation to keep minors safe online. We also need to give serious thought to how companies like Facebook and Instagram continue to hide behind Section 230s liability shield when it comes to content like human trafficking, sex trafficking, drug trafficking.

Despite Congress speaking clearly to this issue when we passed FOSTA and SESTA a few years ago. Mr. Mosseri, there is a lot of work for us to do to improve the online experience and to protect our children and our grandchildren. I think it is best if we do this together, and I look forward to hearing your ideas and your testimony today. Thank you for your appearance.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thanks, Senator Blackburn. And I am pleased to introduce Adam Mosseri. He spent over 11 years at

Meta, and oversees all functions of the Instagram app, including engineering, product management, and operations. Mr. Mosseri, the floor is yours.

STATEMENT OF ADAM MOSSERI, HEAD OF INSTAGRAM, META PLATFORMS INC.

Mr. MOSSERI. Right. Apologies—oh, my apologies. Thank you, Senator. Chairman Blumenthal, Ranking Member Blackburn, members of the subcommittee, I am Adam Mosseri and I have served as the head of Instagram since 2018. And over the last few months, the subcommittee has held a number of hearings on the safety and well-being of young people online. This is a critically important topic, as you said in your opening Statement, and it is something that we think about and work on every day at Instagram.

The Internet has changed how we all communicate. It has changed how we express ourselves. It has changed how we stay connected to the people that we care about. It has also changed what it's like to be a teenager. Teenagers have always spent time with their friends, developed new interests, and explored their identities. Today, they are doing those things on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Snapchat.

I firmly believe that Instagram and that the Internet more broadly can be a positive force in young people's lives. I am inspired every day by teens on Instagram, and I am proud that our platform is a place where they can spend time with the people that they care about, where they can start incredible movements, where they can find new interests, or they can even turn a passion into a business. I also know that sometimes young people can come to Instagram dealing with difficult things in their lives. I believe that Instagram can help in those critical moments.

That is one of the things that our research has shown, and to me, this is the most important work that we can do, taking on complex issues like bullying and social comparison and making changes. Now, I recognize that many in this room have deep reservations about our company. But I want to assure you that we do have the same goal. We all want teens to be safe online.

The Internet isn't going away, and I believe there is important work that we can do together, industry and policymakers, to raise the standards across the Internet to better serve and protect young people. But the reality is that keeping people safe is not just about any one company. An external survey just last month suggested that more teens are using TikTok and YouTube than Instagram. This is an industry wide challenge that requires industry wide solutions and industry wide standards. Now, we have a specific proposal.

We believe there should be an industry body that will determine the best practices when it comes to what I think are the three most important questions with regards to youth safety, how to verify age, how to build age appropriate experiences, and how to build parental controls. The body should receive input from civil society, from parents, and from regulators. The standards need to be high and the protections universal. I believe that companies like ours should have to earn some of their Section 230 protections by adher-

ing to those standards. And we have been calling for regulation for nearly 3 years now. And from where I sit, there is no area more important than new safety.

That said, I understand that developing policy takes time, so we are going to continue to push forward on the safety and well-being of young people online. An age verification. We are developing new technologies to address this industry wide challenge.

We are creating a menu of options to allow people to verify that they are old enough to use Instagram that extend beyond simply relying on an ID card. And we are building new technology to proactively find and remove accounts belonging to those under the age of 13. We are also using technology to understand if people are above or below the age of 18, so that we can create a more age appropriate version of Instagram for them.

For example, adults can no longer message people under the age of 18 that don't follow them. And as of this week, we announced that people can no longer tag or mention teens that don't follow them as well. We also provide tools for parents. Parents and guardians know what is best for their teens and relaunching Instagram's first set of parental controls in March of next year, allowing them to see how much time their teens spend on Instagram and to set time limits. We will also give teens a new option to notify their parents if they report someone, giving their parents an opportunity to talk about it with them.

As a father of three, I care a great deal about creating an online world that is safe for my children and that allows them to benefit from all the amazing things the Internet has to offer. As the head of Instagram, I recognize the gravity of my role in making this happen not only for my kids, but for generations to come. I am hopeful that we can work together to reach that goal. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Mosseri follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ADAM MOSSERI, HEAD OF INSTAGRAM, META PLATFORMS INC.

I. Introduction

Chairman Blumenthal, Ranking Member Blackburn, and members of the Subcommittee, my name is Adam Mosseri, and I have served as the Head of Instagram since 2018. Over the last few months, this Subcommittee has held a number of hearings about the safety and well-being of young people online. This is a critically important topic, and it is something that we think about—and work on—every day at Instagram.

Our mission at Instagram is to bring people closer to the people and things they love. Our platform began a decade ago with a few million users. Today, we proudly serve well over a billion people. While our platform began as a simple photo-sharing app, we have evolved to provide new ways for people to express themselves, including Stories, Reels, and Live. Teens use our app every day to spend time with the people they care about, explore their interests, and express themselves. They are doing incredible things on our platform, and I firmly believe that Instagram can be a force for good in the lives of young people.

Much has been said recently about Instagram and its impact on young people. As a parent and as the Head of Instagram, this is an issue I care deeply about. It's an area our company has been focused on for many years, and I'm proud of our work to help keep young people safe, to support young people who are struggling, and to empower parents with tools to help their teenagers develop healthy and safe online habits.

I hope we can work together—across industry and government—to raise the standards across the Internet and better serve young people. The reality is that keeping young people safe online is not just about one company. An external survey from just last month suggested that more U.S. teens are using TikTok and YouTube

than Instagram.[1] With teens using multiple platforms, it is critical that we address youth online safety as an industry challenge and develop industry-wide solutions and standards.

II. Keeping Young People Safe on Instagram

As Head of Instagram, I am especially focused on the safety of the youngest people who use our services. This work includes keeping underage users off our platform, designing age-appropriate experiences for people ages 13 to 18, and building parental controls.

Age Verification on Instagram

Instagram is built for people 13 and older. If a child is under the age of 13, they are not permitted on Instagram. When we learn someone underage has created an account, we remove them. In fact, in the third quarter of this year, we removed over 850,000 accounts on Instagram that were unable to demonstrate that they meet our minimum age requirement.

Understanding people's age on the Internet is a complex and industry-wide challenge—especially considering that many young people in the U.S. do not have a driver's license until they are 15 or 16 years old. However, we're building new technology to proactively find and remove accounts belonging to those under 13 and to identify those people who may be under the age of 18.

In addition to requiring people to share their date of birth when they register and allowing anyone to report a suspected underage account, we train our technology to identify if people are above or below 18 using multiple signals. We look at things like wishing people a happy birthday and the age written in those messages—for example, "Happy 21st Bday!" or "Happy Quinceañera." This technology isn't perfect, and we're always working to improve it, but that's why it's important that we use it alongside many other signals to understand people's ages.

There is more that we can do as an industry to ensure that there are clear standards of age verification across apps. For instance, I think it would be much more effective to solve the problem at the phone level so that a young person using a phone has an age-appropriate experience across any of the apps that they use on that device.

Keeping Instagram Safe

Understanding age is important so that we can create a more age-appropriate version of Instagram for the youngest people on our platform. We've put in place multiple protections to create safe and age-appropriate experiences for people between the ages of 13 and 18.

Wherever we can, we want to stop young people from hearing from adults they don't know or that they don't want to hear from. We believe accounts that offer people more control about who can see and respond to their content are the best way to prevent this from happening, and we recently announced that everyone who is under 16 years old in the U.S. is defaulted into what is called a private account when they join Instagram. For young people who already have a public account on Instagram, we are sharing a notification highlighting the benefits of a private account and explaining how to change their privacy settings.

Private accounts let people control who sees or responds to their content. If a young person has a private account, people have to follow them to see their posts, Stories, and Reels, unless they choose to allow others to re-share their content. We're also—by default—eliminating the ability for young people to be tagged or mentioned by others or to have their content included in Reels Remixes or Guides. Additionally, people can't comment on their content in those places, and they won't see the young person's content at all in places like Explore or through hashtags.

Encouraging young people to have private accounts is important when it comes to stopping unwanted contact from adults. But we've gone even further to make young people's accounts difficult to find for certain adults. We developed technology that allows us to find accounts that have shown potentially suspicious behavior—for example, an adult account that might already have been blocked by another young person—and to stop those accounts from interacting with young people's accounts. Using this technology, we don't show young people's accounts in Explore, Reels, or 'Accounts Suggested For You' to these adults. If they find young people's accounts by searching for their usernames, they are not able to follow them. They

[1] Mike Prouix, Weekly Usage of TikTok Surpasses Instagram Among U.S. Gen Z Youth, FORRESTER (Nov. 18, 2021), *https://www.forrester.com/blogs/weekly-usage-of-tiktok-surpasses-instagram-among-us-gen-z-youth/*.

also are not able to see comments from young people on other people's posts nor are they able to leave comments on young people's posts.

Additionally, we've launched a number of tools to restrict direct messaging between teens and adults and to prompt teens to be more cautious about interactions in direct messaging. To protect teens from unwanted contact from adults, we introduced a new feature that prevents adults from sending messages to people under 18 who don't follow them. For instance, when an adult tries to message a teen who doesn't follow them, they receive a notification that says that sending a Direct Message isn't an option.

In addition to preventing conversations between adults and teens who don't follow one another, we started using prompts—or safety notices—to encourage teens to be cautious in conversations with adults they're already connected to. These safety notices alert young people when an adult who has been exhibiting potentially suspicious behavior is interacting with them. For example, if an adult is sending a large amount of friend or message requests to people under 18, we use this tool to alert the recipients and give them an option to end the conversation, or block, report, or restrict the adult.

Our work to create age-appropriate experiences for teenagers on Facebook and Instagram also includes age gating certain content, prohibiting certain types of ads from being served to minors, and limiting options for serving any ads to these users.

We've always had rules about the kinds of content we suggest to people in places like the Explore tab. These rules apply to everyone, but we're going to go a step further for young people. We're developing a new experience that will raise the bar even higher for what we recommend for them in Search, Explore, hashtags, and suggested accounts. This new experience will make it harder for young people to find potentially sensitive content on Instagram.

We're also optimistic about using nudges to point people towards different topics. External experts have suggested that, if people are dwelling on one topic for a while, it could be helpful to nudge them towards other topics.[2] [3] That's why we're building a new experience that will nudge people towards other topics if they've been spending time on one topic for a while.

When it comes to advertising, we've long restricted certain kinds of ads from being served to minors, and we recently limited advertisers' options for serving ads to people under 18. Now, advertisers can only serve ads to people under 18 based on age, gender, and location but not interests or activity. This means that previously available targeting options, like those based on interests or on their activity on other apps and websites, are no longer available to advertisers.

Supporting Teens Who May Be Struggling

In addition to making sure young people are safe on Instagram, we believe it's important to support young people who are struggling with mental health and well-being.

Sometimes young people come to Instagram dealing with hard things in their lives. I believe Instagram can help many of them in those moments. This is something that our research has suggested as well. One of the internal studies that has been the subject of much discussion showed that teen boys and girls who reported struggling with loneliness, anxiety, sadness, and eating disorders were more likely to say that Instagram made those difficult times *better* rather than worse.

We care deeply about the teens on Instagram, which is in part why we research complex issues like bullying and social comparison and make changes. We have a long track record of using research and close collaboration with our Safety Advisory Board, Youth Advisors, and additional experts and organizations to inform changes to our apps and provide resources for the people who use them.

We don't allow people to post graphic suicide and self-harm content, content that depicts methods or materials involved in suicide and self-harm (even if it's not graphic), or fictional content that promotes or encourages suicide or self-harm. In the third quarter of 2021, we removed 96 percent of this content before it was reported to us.

Since 2019, we've taken steps to protect more vulnerable members of our community from being exposed to suicide and self-harm related content that is permissible under our policies, for example, if someone posts about their recovery journey. We

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[2] Aditya Purohit *et al.*, Designing for Digital Detox: Making Social Media Less Addictive with Digital Nudges, ASSOC. FOR COMPUTING MACHINERY (Apr. 2020), *https://dl.acm.org/doi/10.1145/3334480.3382810.*

[3] Christoph Schneider *et al.*, Digital Nudging: Guiding Online User Choices through Interface Design. Communications of the ACM (July 2018), *https://cacm.acm.org/magazines/2018/7/229029-digital-nudging/fulltext.*

remove known suicide-and self-harm-related posts from places where people discover new content, including our Explore page, and we will not recommend accounts we have identified as featuring suicide or self-injury content.

We also remove certain hashtags and accounts from appearing in search. When someone starts typing a known hashtag or account related to suicide and self-harm into search, we restrict these results. We also add sensitivity screens to blur more content that isn't graphic but could have a negative impact on someone searching.

We have a resource center[4] developed with help from mental health partners, and, when a post is identified as being about suicide (either because a friend reported it or our technology detected it), a person at Meta reviews the post. If it's about suicide, we provide resources to the poster such as a one-click link to the Crisis Text Line. Additionally, whomever reported the post also receives resources and information about how to help the person in distress.

Similarly, we don't allow content that promotes or encourages eating disorders on our platforms. We use technology and reports from our community to find and remove this content as quickly as we can, and we're always working to improve. We follow expert advice from academics and mental health organizations, like the National Eating Disorder Association ("NEDA"), to strike the difficult balance between allowing people to share their mental health experiences while protecting them from potentially harmful content.

We've made a number of changes to support those struggling with eating disorders. When someone searches for or posts content related to eating disorders or body image issues, they'll see a pop-up with tips and an easy way to connect to organizations like NEDA in the US.

We also introduced a dedicated reporting option for eating disorder content. People have always been able to report content related to eating disorders, but, until recently, this was combined with the option to report suicide and self-harm-related content, because they are part of one policy—but now people will see a separate dedicated option for eating disorder content.

We also worked with the JED Foundation to create expert-and research-backed educational resources for teens on how to navigate experiences like negative social comparison.[5]

Lastly, we don't allow people to bully or harass other people on Instagram and have rules in place that prohibit this type of content. We've also built tools that help prevent bullying from happening in the first place and empower people to manage their accounts so they never have to see it.

We launched Restrict in 2019, which allows people to protect themselves from bullying without the fear of retaliation.[6] We also created comment warnings when people try to post potentially offensive comments. So far, we've found that, about 50 percent of the time, people edited or deleted their comments based on these warnings.

We recently announced a new tool called 'Limits' that lets people automatically hide comments and direct message requests from people who don't follow them, or who only recently followed them. We developed this feature because we heard that creators and public figures sometimes experience sudden spikes of comments and message requests from people they don't know. In many cases, this is an outpouring of support, but sometimes it can also mean an influx of unwanted comments or messages. Now, if you're going through that—or think you may be about to—you can turn on Limits and protect yourself.

We also recently launched Hidden Words, which automatically filters message requests containing offensive words, phrases, and emojis into a separate inbox so people never have to see them. Because messages are private conversations, we don't proactively look for hate speech or bullying the same way we do elsewhere on Instagram, so Hidden Words allows people to control what they see and receive in messages and protect themselves from abuse. In addition, all accounts on Instagram have the option to switch off messages from people they don't follow. This means people never have to receive a message from anyone they don't know.

These are just a few examples of the tools we developed to protect people from bullying and harassment. We have numerous other tools including comment controls, blocking, and managing who can comment on your posts and who can tag and mention you.

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[4] Suicide Prevention, *https://www.facebook.com/safety/wellbeing/suicideprevention.*

[5] More information on this work is available here: *https://pressuretobeperfect.jedfoundation.org/.*

[6] Introducing the "Restrict" Feature to Protect Against Bullying, Instagram Blog (Oct. 2, 2019), *https://about.instagram.com/blog/announcements/stand-up-against-bullying-with-restrict.*

Giving Teens Tools to Control their Experience

We want to give people on our platform—especially teenagers—tools to help them manage their experiences in the ways that they want and need, including the time they spend. We have built time management tools including Daily Limit, which lets people know when they've reached the total amount of time they want to spend on Instagram each day; 'You're All Caught Up,' which notifies people when they've caught up with new content on their feed; and controls to mute notifications.

This week, we launched 'Take A Break' to go even further and empower people to make informed decisions about how they're spending their time on Instagram. We'll show reminders suggesting that people close Instagram if they've been scrolling for a certain amount of time, and we'll show them expert-backed tips to help them reflect and reset. We want to make sure young people are aware of this feature, so we'll show them notifications suggesting they turn the reminders on.

Also this week, we began testing a new activity center, a central place for people to see and manage their information on Instagram. For the first time, people will be able to bulk delete content they've posted like photos and videos as well as their previous likes and comments. While available to everyone, this tool will help young people more fully understand what information they've shared on Instagram and what is visible to others and give them an easy way to manage their digital footprint.

Prioritizing and Expanding Parental Controls

We want parents to have the information to help their teens have a safe and positive experience on Instagram. That's why in March we're launching Instagram's first set of controls for parents and guardians, allowing them to see what their teens are up to on Instagram and manage things like the time they spend in our app. These new features, which parents and teens can opt into, will give parents tools to meaningfully shape their teen's experience.

In the US, we've also collaborated with The Child Mind Institute and ConnectSafely to publish a new Parents Guide that includes the latest safety tools and privacy settings as well as a list of tips and conversation starters to help parents navigate discussions with their teens about their online presence.[7]

III. Using Research to Improve Instagram

A lot of focus in recent weeks has been about internal research. As our Head of Research Pratiti Raychoudhury has written, the public reporting about our internal research was mischaracterized, so I want to take a moment to address it. Among other things, the research in question actually demonstrated that many teens said that using Instagram helped them when they were struggling with the kinds of hard moments that teenagers have always faced.

In addition to putting specific findings in context, it is also critical to make the nature of this research clear. This research, some of which relied on input from only 40 teens, was designed to inform internal conversations about teens' most negative perceptions of Instagram. It did not measure causal relationships between Instagram and real-world issues.

Our goal with all of the research that we do is to improve the services that we offer. That means our insights often shed light on problems so that we can evaluate possible solutions and work to improve. We believe this work is critical to delivering a better Instagram.

Moving forward, we will continue to collaborate and engage in data-sharing with researchers on issues related to young people. We have been working with external academics and research partners in this space for many years, and we plan to do even more early next year. This is something that we have done in our program with independent academics around the U.S. 2020 elections. We will take the methodology from the U.S. 2020 program and apply it to well-being research over the coming year. This will involve collaborative co-design of studies and peer-reviewed publication of findings.

In addition, we are continuing our investment in external research to better understand how to keep young people safe and to ensure their well-being is protected in the metaverse. For example, we committed to providing [redacted] over three years to the Digital Wellness Lab at Boston Children's Hospital for independent research on these important topics.

[7] Instagram Teen Safety for Parents, *https://about.instagram.com/community/parents#guide.*

IV. Supporting Industry Regulation to Protect Young People

The reality is that keeping young people safe online is not just about one company. We've been calling for updated regulations for nearly three years. From where I sit, there is no area more important than youth safety.

Specifically, we believe there should be an industry body that will determine best practices when it comes to at least three questions: how to verify age, how to design age-appropriate experiences, and how to build parental controls. This body should receive input from civil society, parents, and regulators to create standards that are high and protections that are universal. And I believe that companies like ours should have to adhere to these standards to earn some of our Section 230 protections.

In addition, the body could take steps to require each member to publish regular reports on the progress they are making against each standard and to develop a free and accessible information hub for parents and educators.

This proposal is a work in progress, but we hope that it will contribute to the ongoing discussion about how appropriate regulation can help us address these critical issues. In the meantime, we will continue to push forward on safety and well-being for young people online.

V. Conclusion

We want young people to enjoy using Instagram while making sure we don't compromise on their privacy and safety. As we work toward that goal, we'll continue listening to them, their parents, lawmakers, and experts to build an Instagram that works for everyone and is trusted by parents.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thanks, Mr. Mosseri. I will take the first round of questions. Again, we are going to do 5 minute rounds. Just a short while ago at our last hearing, TikTok, Snapchat, and YouTube sat at that table, and they all committed to making internal research algorithms and datasets about their effect on children and teens available to independent researchers. Will you commit to doing the same?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, we believe it is important to be transparent, both about ranking and algorithms and about data for research. I can commit to you today that we will provide meaningful access to data so that third party researchers can design their own studies and make their own conclusions about the effects of well-being on young people and on ranking. I can commit to do all I can to explain how ranking works and to find other ways for us to be transparent about algorithms.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Will you support a legal requirement that independent overseers and researchers not only have access to the data sets, but also check the way algorithms are driving content and recommend changes that you will adopt?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I would be happy to have my office work with you on that. I believe that direction is an important one. We do a number of things in this area already. We provide information every month on the effects of our algorithms that are removing problematic content from our system.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Will you commit to a legal requirement that the access be provided and that an independent, separately appointed and separately funded body, not an industry body, as you have suggested, but an independent overseer and researcher, have that access?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator on the specifics of how the body works, I am not a legal expert, but yes, I think there should be requirements and standards for how companies like ours are transparent about both data and algorithms.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Because an industry body is not Government regulation that Mark Zuckerberg or others at Facebook and elsewhere have called for. An industry body setting standards is not the same as an independent one.

Let me ask you, shouldn't children and parents have the right to report dangerous material and get a response, get some action? Because we have heard harrowing stories from parents who tried to report and have heard no response.

My office made a report and got no response until CNN made the report to press relations. Shouldn't there be an obligation that Instagram will respond?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, yes, I believe we try and respond to all reports and if we ever fail to do so, that is a mistake that we should correct.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Instagram is addictive. That is the view that has been repeated again and again and again by people who are experts in this field. Parents know it. And for teens who see Instagram's algorithms encouraging, for example, eating disorders, they find it almost impossible to stop. The UK code restricts Instagram's use of addictive design, legally restricts its use of addictive design. Shouldn't we have a similar rule in the United States?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, respectfully, I don't believe the research suggests that our products are addictive. Research actually shows that on 11 of 12 difficult issues that teens face, teens that are struggling said Instagram helps for their harms. Now we always care about how people feel about their experiences on our platform, and it is my responsibility as Head of Instagram to do everything I can to help keep people safe, and we are going to continue to do so.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. We can debate the meaning of the word addictive, but the fact is that teens who go to the platform, find it difficult, maybe sometimes impossible, to stop. And part of the reason is that more content is driven to them to keep them on the site, to aggravate the emotions that are so seductive and ultimately addictive.

The UK recognized it by imposing that design restriction. The same ought to be done in the United States. Let me ask you, will you commit to make the pause on Instagram Kids permanent? In other words, stop developing a site for, an app for, children under 13?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, the idea of building a version of Instagram for 10 to 12 year olds was trying to solve a problem. The Idea being that we know that 10 to 12 year olds are online. They want to use platforms like Instagram, and it is difficult for companies like ours to verify age for those that are so young, they don't yet have an ID.

The hope is to always or the plan was to always make sure that no child between 10 and 12 had access to any version of Instagram, even one that was designed for them, without their parent's consent.

And so what I can commit to today is that no child between the ages of 10 to 12, should we ever manage to build Instagram for 10

to 12 year olds, will have access to that without their explicit parental consent.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I have more questions. My time has expired. I thank you for answering my questions, Mr. Mosseri. Senator Blackburn.

Senator BLACKBURN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Staying on Instagram Kids for a moment. I know you were doing research into 8 year olds and pulling together data on 8 year olds, and I assume and that that was in relation to Instagram Kids. So, are you still doing research on children under age 13?

Mr. MOSSERI. Sorry, I am making sure my mic is on. Senator, I don't believe we ever did any research with eight-year olds for Instagram Kids, and neither are we doing that today. I think we entirely paused the project.

Senator BLACKBURN. OK. And then if you were to completely remove that project, who would make that decision?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, it was my decision to pause Instagram Kids——

Senator BLACKBURN. OK, so you would—it would be your decision to just do away with it?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I am responsible for Instagram, so yes, it would be my decision.

Senator BLACKBURN. OK, let's talk about Jane Doe v. Facebook.

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, what?

Senator BLACKBURN. Jane Doe v. Facebook.

Mr. MOSSERI. OK. Apologies.

Senator BLACKBURN. OK. I assume you can't get into the details of that because the Supreme Court is still deciding whether or not to take that case. But the petition, which alleges that Facebook enabled the trafficking of a minor on its platform, really raises some very serious questions and concerns about what we are seeing and how people were using Instagram. So do you prohibit known sex offenders from creating Instagram accounts?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, human trafficking and any exploitation of children is abhorrent, and we don't allow it on our platforms.

Senator BLACKBURN. OK, do you require minors to link their accounts to a parent or guardian's account?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, no.

Senator BLACKBURN. You don't?

Mr. MOSSERI. If you are over the age of 13, you can sign up for an Instagram account. But we do believe that parental controls are incredibly important, which is why we are launching our first version in March of next year.

Senator BLACKBURN. OK. You know, yes, the controls are going to be vitally important, but an industry group is not going to give the controls that are needed and probably not even an independent group. That is why we will do something with Federal statute.

Also, I think it would be interesting to know how many people that are in human trafficking, sex trafficking, and drug trafficking that have been indicted or convicted that were using Instagram. Could you all provide that number for us?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I would be happy to talk to the team and get back to you.

Senator BLACKBURN. That would be excellent. My staff created an Instagram account for a 15-year-old girl and it defaulted to public. I mentioned that earlier. Isn't the opposite supposed to happen? And have you considered turning off the public option altogether for minor accounts?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I appreciate the question. I learned of that just this morning. It turns out that we default those under the age of 16 to private accounts for the vast majority of accounts which are created on Android and iOS. We have missed that on the web, and we will correct that quickly.

Senator BLACKBURN. OK. Also, when they created this account, it defaulted to this Statement, "include your account when recommending similar accounts people might want to follow." Is this a feature that should remain on by default for minors?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, we think it is important that no matter what your age, it is easy for you to find accounts that you are interested in.

Senator BLACKBURN. Even if you are under 18?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I believe teenagers too have interests, and that should be easy for them to find those.

Senator BLACKBURN. Teenagers have interests, yes. But what we are trying to address are the adverse and negative effects that are happening to children because they are on your platform. Can adults not labeled as suspicious by you still find, follow, and message minors?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, if your account is private, if someone follows you, you have to approve it. So adults can ask to follow you, but you have the decision or the ability to decide whether or not they are allowed to.

Senator BLACKBURN. OK. In your testimony, you said you removed more than 850,000 accounts because they did not meet your minimum age requirement. These accounts were disabled because the users did not provide identification showing that they were at least 13 years old. So why did you say you didn't want to know when Jojo Siwa said she had been on Instagram since she was 8 years old. Is that your general attitude toward kids who are on your platform?

Mr. MOSSERI. Absolutely not, Senator. We invest a lot to try to identify those under the age of 13, and whenever we find them, we remove.

Senator BLACKBURN. OK, but at that moment, when you responded to her that you did not want to know, why didn't you use that as a teaching moment?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I would say it was a missed opportunity.

Senator BLACKBURN. Indeed, it was a missed opportunity, and it sends the wrong message. It looked as if you were encouraging kids that want to be online stars to get on earlier and to build their audience. This is a part of our frustration with you, with Instagram, and with these platforms. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thanks, Senator Blackburn. Senator Klobuchar.

STATEMENT OF HON. AMY KLOBUCHAR,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MINNESOTA

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Thank you. Mr. Mosseri, I am looking at this from a perspective of parents, and I guess I have talked to parents, since so many of them have told me that they have done everything they can to try to get their kids off your product, kids who are addicted at age 10. And they are scared for their kids. They want their kids to do their homework and not get addicted to Instagram.

And yet we then find out that what your company did was to increase your marketing budget to try to woo more teens, [redacted]. And so when I hear you are going to suddenly, with all your technological wizards, develop some kind of new way to check to see if really young kids are on there, you could have been spending this money, [redacted], to do that for years. You have the money to do it. I think that we are in diametrically opposed goals, the goals of parents out there and the goals of your company. Our kids aren't cash cows.

And that is exactly what has been going on. Because when you look at the marketing budget and you look at what your companies has done, it is to try to get more and more of them on board. And when I look at your company's quotes from one document, you—not you personally, but your company viewed losing teen users as an "existential threat," whereas parents are viewing their kids' addictions to your product and other products as an existential threat to their families.

So my first question is, is that in fact the truth, that you have been increasing money, advertising money to woo more teen kids onto your platform?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, no, I don't believe those statistics are correct. We increased our overall marketing budget between last year and this year, but it was not—I think, as you characterized it, as the majority of it was focused on teens, and that is not true.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. OK, had you view the kids as a feeder way for people to get into your product? Have you not done things to get more teenagers interested in your product? Are you not worried about losing them to other platforms? You better tell the truth. You are under oath.

Mr. MOSSERI. Absolutely, Senator. Senator, we try and make Instagram as relevant as possible for people of all ages, including teens. Teens do amazing things on Instagram every day, but we also invest, I believe, more than anyone else in keeping people, including teens, safe. [redacted], and we have over 40,000 people working on safety integrity at the company.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. And do you think 3 hours a day is an appropriate amount of time for kids to spend on Instagram?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator——

Senator KLOBUCHAR. I am asking this because just when you put out those new rules, that was an option for parents 3 hours a day. Is that a good use of kids' time?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I appreciate the question.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. And it was in your safety tools that you just put out there. The first option given to kids and to parents was 3 hours a day.

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator——

Senator KLOBUCHAR. I have them. Can I put them on the record? So, Chair——

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Without objection.

[The information referred to was unavailable at time of printing.]

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Thank you.

Mr. MOSSERI. If I may, Senator, I am a parent and I can understand that parents have concerns about how much screen time their kids have. I think that is—I think every parent feels that way. I ultimately think that as a parent, that a parent knows best what is best for their teens.

So the appropriate amount of time should be a decision by a parent about the specific teen. If one parent wants to set that limit at 10 minutes and another parent wants to set that limit at 3 hours, who am I to say that they don't know what is best for their children?

Senator KLOBUCHAR. And do you believe your company has invested enough in identifying that young children are not on the platform, when you know that they are not supposed to be on there, and making sure you are registering and using all your technology not to just increase your profit, but to make sure the kids aren't on there? You think you have done enough?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator. Two things. One, yes, I believe that we have invested more than anyone else. But I also believe that it is still a very challenging industry wide issue. I think there is a number of things that we can do at the industry level to better verify age. Specifically, I believe it would be much more effective to have age verification at the device level. Have a parent who gives their 14 year old a device, tell the phone that their child is 14, as opposed to having every app, and there is millions of apps out there, trying to verify age on their own.

That should happen at the device level. We understand that might not happen or that might take time. And in the meantime, we are going to invest heavily in getting more sophisticated in how we identify the age of people under the age of 18.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. And is it true that someone in your company said that it was an existential threat if you lost teen users?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I don't——

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Is that true or not? Because we have a document that said that.

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I assume that is true.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. OK, so you understand what we are thinking up here when it is our job to protect kids, and we have parent after parent calling our office, e-mailing us, one of the parents likened to me that it was like a water faucet going off and it was overflowing and she is sitting there with a mop, trying to figure out how to use all of the tools you give them that she can't figure out how to use.

So I think at some point the accountabilities on you guys. And that means everything from the privacy bills to expanding the child protections online to the competition policy, because maybe if we

had actual competition in this country instead of Meta owning you and owning most of the platforms and most of the back and forth for kids, maybe we could have another platform developed that would have the privacy protections that you have not been able to develop in terms of keeping teens off your platform that aren't even old enough to be on there.

So that is what I think—some food for thought for all of you is the opposition to some of the competition policy, capitalism, pro-capitalism ideas that we have over in judiciary, and I will hand it back to our Chair.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you, Senator Klobuchar. Thanks for your work, your leadership on this issue here and on the Judiciary committee, where we are on the Subcommittee on Antitrust which you chair. I will ask a couple of questions because we have a vote ongoing, so a number of my colleagues will be returning from the floor. You know your suggestion for tech companies to earn Section 230 protection has a certain appeal to me since I am the author of the EARN IT Act along with Senator Graham.

It is also the concept that underlies other proposals that we have made. But that is not Government regulation. So the question is, will you support the UK's children's code that Instagram has to obey in the UK? Shouldn't kids in the United States have protection as good as the kids in UK enjoy?

Mr. MOSSERI. Absolutely, Senator. A few quick things. One is I believe that is the age appropriate design for getting the last letter of the acronym. And I believe it is something that we support. And we support safety standards for kids everywhere, including here in the U.S.

But also, if you would indulge me for a minute, I would like to clarify that my proposal is, yes, an industry body that sets standards for youth safety with input from civil society, from policymakers, and from parents, but one—that once the standards are proposed, it would be approved by policymakers like yourself. And I also believe that policymakers or regulators should make the decision of whether or not any individual company like mine is adhering to those standards. So it is not simply——

Senator BLUMENTHAL. And then enforce them, bring lawsuits, seek damages?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, we believe that a strong incentive would be to tie some of the Section 230 protections to adherence, and that could be a decision by regulators.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. So would the Attorney General of the United States or the Attorney General of a state like Connecticut, where I was Attorney General, have the power to enforce those standards?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, we believe in enforcement. Specifically how to implement that enforcement is something that we would like to work with your office on and other offices as well.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Well, that is a simple yes or no. Enforceability has to be part of your proposal.

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I agree, enforceability is incredibly important. Without enforcement, it is just words.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. So you think that the Attorney General of the United States could enforce those standards, which means they would be written in the statute?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I don't know, because I am not a legal expert, if the best way to enforce it would be with the Attorney General. But in general, I think it should happen at the Federal level, and it is something that I would be happy to have my team work with you.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Do you favor private rights of action, so individuals who were harmed could bring an action against Meta?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I believe that it is important, that companies like ours are held accountable to high standards. But I believe the most important way or the most effective way of doing so is to define industry standards and best practices at the Federal level ideally and to seek enforcement, as you suggest.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. These are really yes or no questions. They are pretty clear. And I know you are knowledgeable about them, so I hope you will answer them more clearly in the answers that you provide in writing. I am going to yield to Senator Klobuchar.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. I am just, and I can do this on the record, but I did want to, since you denied this idea that the marketing budget went from [redacted], and that much of the budget was allocated to wooing teens, that was reported on by the [redacted]. So do you still deny that this is the fact?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, occasionally, there are reports that are inaccurate. In this case, I believe that report or that article said that the majority of our budget was focused on teens, and I know for a fact that that was not the case.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Much of the budget. Is that accurate?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I don't remember off the top of my head.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Then could you give me the number or what percentage of the budget was focused on teens? You must, as a business, be able to break it down that way, so that would be helpful. I will pass that in writing.

Mr. MOSSERI. I would be happy to follow up with you on that.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. OK, thank you.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Senator Markey.

STATEMENT OF HON. EDWARD MARKEY,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MASSACHUSETTS

Senator MARKEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You know, thanks to your leadership, Mr. Chairman, we have Frances Haugen, who has told us quite clearly that 32 percent of teen girls say that when they feel bad about their bodies, Instagram makes them feel worse. And 6 percent of American teen users trace their desire to kill themselves to Instagram. That is your own research, Mr. Mosseri.

Yet, faced with these frightening findings, did Facebook back off its efforts to target children? No, just the opposite. Facebook pursued plans to launch a version of the platform for even younger users, Instagram Kids, and that is appalling. Mr. Mosseri, I am glad Facebook has heeded my calls and paused these plans. But you have since publicly doubled down on Instagram Kids and said it is, "the right thing to do."

Your Statement makes crystal clear that self-regulation is not an option for parents and children in the United States of America. Instagram sees a dollar sign when it sees kids. Parents should see a stop sign when it sees Instagram. Mr. Mosseri, do you support my bipartisan legislation with Senator Blumenthal, Senator Cassidy, Senator Lummis to update the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act and give 13, 14, and 15 year olds control over their data, yes or no?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, respectfully, it is important that we are clear on what the research actually shows. Any loss of life to suicide or to anything any other reason is a tragedy. But that was—the 6 percent number is inaccurate. It was 1 percent of teens who traced their thoughts back. Now, anybody feeling worse about themselves is something that we take incredibly seriously.

Now you asked if I support this specific Act that you are proposing. I do strongly support Federal regulation, not industry regulation, when it comes to youth safety. That said, if you move the age from 13 to 16, we know that 14 and 15 year olds also want to be online, they also can lie about their age, and you are going to make the challenge of age verification even more difficult.

That said, I do believe that 13 isn't a magic number. People's needs as they grow up, evolve and we should build age appropriate experiences based on children's age.

Senator MARKEY. So will you give 13 to 15 year olds the right to have all of their information expunged——

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator——

Senator MARKEY—that is being gathered online? Do you support legislation that would give parents and children the ability to have their records expunged?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, you can already delete your account and all of your data. You should have that right, whether or not you are a teenager or an adult.

Senator MARKEY. Would you support national legislation mandates that each parent and child be given the ability to expunge it? Would you support legislation to do that, make it mandatory?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I would support legislation that required companies like ours to allow people to delete their data, yes.

Senator MARKEY. Yes, OK. And just to make that a permanent protection that is on the books. Would you support legislation to ban targeted ads toward children—both teens and children?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, we believe that anyone should always have an age appropriate experience on Instagram or in any social platform, and that extends to ads. We have different rules for ads on Instagram and on Facebook. We only allow advertisers to target based on age, based on gender, and based on location, and we don't allow certain types of ads, things like weight loss ads and dating ads for those under the age of 18 or alcohol related ads for those under the age of 21.

Senator MARKEY. So do you support legislation that would ban targeting of ads to children, yes or no?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I believe it is valuable for ads to be relevant, but I do believe that some measures need to be taken to keep children safe, which is why I would support something in the

direction of what we do, which is to limit the targeting abilities of platforms.

Senator MARKEY. Well, again, yes and no. Mandate or no mandate. That is the question. It is exactly why we have to make sure that Facebook and Instagram don't reserve the right to be able to target these kids. Yes or no?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I am trying to be specific about what I would support, which is what we build, which is a limited targeting options.

Senator MARKEY. Would—again, I just keep coming back to the fact that your answers are too vague to make it possible for us to make these decisions on a legislative way and to do so in the very near future, which is what I think we have to do. And the chilling truth, unfortunately, continues to just be that in the absence of regulation, that big tech has become a threat to our democracy, our society, and to the children in our country. And let's just be clear, Facebook, which owns Instagram, opposes regulation.

Your idea of regulation is an industry group creating standards that your company follows. That is self-regulation. That is status quo, and that just won't cut it post the revelations that this subcommittee has made public. We do need laws. We need laws passed by this body. We have to ban targeted ads.

We have to make sure that that is the law in our country. And everything that this subcommittee has unveiled continues to make that a necessity, including the testimony that you are delivering today. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thanks, Senator Markey. Senator Baldwin.

STATEMENT OF HON. TAMMY BALDWIN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM WISCONSIN

Senator BALDWIN. So I—sorry, I missed just a segment as I went over to vote, and it may have come up because this is work I did with Senator Klobuchar, but I joined Senators Klobuchar and Capito in writing to Meta for more information about how Instagram is combating eating disorder content and the harms it brings to users, particularly young people.

In response to a question about how the platform is working to remove this content, Meta indicated that it uses a combination, I am quoting now from the letter, "a combination of reports from our community, human review, and artificial intelligence" to find and take down material that violates your terms of service.

The response further notes that there are more than 15,000 human reviewers on staff. I also met with Frances Haugen, the former Facebook employee whose disclosures has spurred this series of hearings.

And when I asked her about what more Instagram could do to remove content like this, content glorifying eating disorders, she argued that more human review is really the key. According to her, many community reports simply are not investigated, and artificial intelligence cannot successfully identify patterns, networks, and distribution points for problematic content.

Given that Meta's platforms, according to your own data, have 3.6 billion monthly active users, the 15,000 reviewers would seem

to pale in comparison to the amount of content those 3.6 billion monthly active users could post.

Do you agree that more human reviewers will help you move more successfully at removing problematic content more quickly? And if so, will your company commit to strengthening its investment in human review?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, thank you for the question. We have over 40,000 people, human reviewers and otherwise, and engineers who work on safety and integrity. I mean, we are investing about [redacted] And at a high level, people are better at nuance, and technology is often better at scale. I think the most effective thing we can do not only for eating disorder content, which is tragic and a complicated societal issue, is to invest more, particularly on the technologies that on both, and we are going to continue to do so.

Senator BALDWIN. Let me ask, I know that this hearing is focused mostly on youth and harmful—but how many, in how many countries is Instagram available?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, Instagram is available in over 70 languages. I unfortunately don't know the number of countries off the top of my head, but I would be happy to get back to you with that number.

Senator BALDWIN. OK, so 70 languages. That is the point I was going to get to. Of those 40,000 or 15,000, which is what was in the, I think, the letter response, how many are language specific, sort of, monitoring content in each of those 70 languages?

Mr. MOSSERI. Thank you, Senator. Actually, I misspoke. We review content in 70 languages. We have even more languages that we, people speak that use Instagram, and we are always looking to increase the number that we cover. I apologize for the mistake.

Senator BALDWIN. OK, so there are gaps then in terms of human review in those areas?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, we are always looking to improve, not only through language coverage, but through building more accurate classifiers, through improving the efficiency of our reviewers because it helps keep people more safe.

Senator BALDWIN. I may have some followups with regard to that that are more specific, but we also all know that there is tremendous social pressure for kids to utilize social media platforms and services. And while it is the industry standard to block or restrict access to those younger than 13, we know that younger teens and tweens are still signing up for social media accounts.

I appreciate that your company decided to press pause on its proposed service focused on younger kids earlier this year. I understand from your announcement yesterday that Meta is looking to introduce new parent controls and other tools for Instagram in the coming months.

But I am concerned about what you are doing today to keep kids under 13 off the platform. So tell me a little bit more about what you are doing to strengthen age verification and why, given the problems of which you are already well aware with Instagram and Meta's experience with other services focused on younger kids like Messenger Kids, why have you waited to institute more parental controls or other steps protecting young users?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, on the parental controls question, I believe as a parent, it is going to be more responsible to develop an age appropriate version of Instagram for those under 13. But I paused that project, and I took the exact work they were building, which was parental controls because no one was going to have access unless they had their parent's consent. We pivoted that to teens because 13 isn't a magical number. But you also asked, how do we verify the age of those under 13? It is difficult, given that young people of that age don't have an ID in most countries.

We built what we call classifiers, which try to predict age, and then we ask people to prove their age if it looks like they might be too young. We look at things like, you know, in certain countries, you know, sweet 16 is a cultural norm here in the U.S.

And so we look forward to people say that on someone's birthday, does that line up with the age that they said? And we get better over time as we get more signals, but it is, I want to be very clear, it is not perfect, which is why I believe there are better industry-wide ways to solve age verification because it really is an industry challenge that is not unique to Facebook or to Instagram.

Senator BLACKBURN. Thank you. Chairman Blumenthal will be back from his vote in a moment, and we are going to be starting our second round. We have some other members that are coming for their first round. In the meantime, I want to return to a question I asked you about those that are human traffickers, sex traffickers, drug traffickers, their utilization of your site. Now, I know that in 2020, you sent over 21 million sex abuse images on your platform, Facebook sent these to NCMEC.

So I thank you for doing that. That is the right thing to do. I am interested to know whether these child exploitation images and reports, if in your report, do you include traffickers, and do you include those violations when you make that report to NCMEC with these images?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I have to check on that specific and get back to you, but we do allow you to report an image or photo for violating any of our standards. And you can see how well we are at reducing the prevalence of those problems, and our consumer——

Senator BLACKBURN. Get back to us and let us know if you are also reporting these individuals that are posting and sharing these sexual abuse images of children. Senator Thune, you are recognized for five——

STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN THUNE,
U.S. SENATOR FROM SOUTH DAKOTA

Senator THUNE. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thanks for holding today's hearing. The lack of transparency from big tech companies and the effect these companies have on consumers is concerning to the public and rightfully so. Because of the secrecy with which big tech protects their algorithms and content moderation practices, we have little idea how these companies use algorithms to amplify or suppress content, or how they can affect the behavior of users without their knowledge.

Tomorrow, the Communications subcommittee on which I serve as Ranking Member will take a closer look at the effects of this

persuasive technology, and I look forward to hearing from the panel about the details of how algorithms and artificial intelligence are designed and deployed on Internet platforms to manipulate users, as well as the bigger picture about what the future might hold for us when corporations and Governments know more information about each of us than we know about ourselves.

We must find ways to improve more transparency and accountability in the algorithms deployed on Internet platforms that select the content that billions of people see every day. Since hearing from the Facebook whistleblower, we now have more insight into Instagram and Facebook's troubling practices with regard to how it uses algorithms. And in my view, it is long past time for Congress to enact legislation to ensure that these companies are held accountable.

There is also bipartisan support for shedding more light on the secretive content moderation processes big tech uses and to provide consumers more options when engaging with Internet platforms, which is why I have introduced two bipartisan bills to address these issues, the PACT Act and the Filter Bubble Transparency Act.

And I look forward to, in the time that I have, to discussing those issues with you today, Mr. Mosseri. And let me start by just asking, does Instagram use persuasive technology, meaning technology that is designed to change people's attitudes and behaviors?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I have worked on ranking and algorithms for years, and that is not how we work. We use ranking to try and connect people with the friends that they find meaningful, and we use them to try and keep people safe.

Senator THUNE. The *Wall Street Journal* revealed that Instagram often ignored warnings about the harmful impact the platform had on users, particularly on girls. With that being said, do you believe consumers should be able to use Instagram without being manipulated by algorithms that are designed to keep them hooked on the platform?

And would you support giving consumers more options when engaging on Instagram's platform. For instance, providing consumers a feed that is not being fed to them by algorithms or that is in a chronological order?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I believe it is important that people have control over their experience. So yes, I would support giving people the option to have a chronological feed.

Senator THUNE. On the issue of Section 230 reform, Senator Schatz and I have introduced legislation that would, among other things, require platforms like Instagram to provide for more due process to users regarding their moderation and censorship practices, and submit public transparency reports about content that has been removed or de-emphasized. Do you believe this provision would help build trust with Instagram's users?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, we believe in more transparency and accountability, and we believe in more control. That is why we are currently working on a version of a chronological feed that we hope to launch next year. That is why we provide a number of ways for you to see how content moderation works on the platform.

So, for instance, today you can go to the account center. I believe it is called account status and see any of your content that has been taken down. And that is why we are working on more ways to give people more control over their experience and create more transparency about how Instagram works.

Senator THUNE. Do you believe that algorithm explanation or algorithm transparency are appropriate policy responses?

Mr. MOSSERI. I believe very strongly in algorithmic transparency. I think it would be hard for you to find someone who has tried as much to explain how ranking works. There is a number of ways to be transparent. I think in some cases, the most effective is to look at the output of algorithms like we do in our community guidelines enforcement report. In other cases, it is more appropriate to explain how they work instead of releasing millions of lines of code.

Senator THUNE. And could you just elaborate a little bit on when you talk about creating and giving consumers a feed that is not being fed to them by an algorithm or that is in a chronological order? You said that you are going to implement that policy beginning next year. How did you come to that decision, and sort of more specifically, what the dates for that implementation, and maybe if you could elaborate a little bit on just exactly what that might look like?

Mr. MOSSERI. Absolutely, Senator. So we have been focused for a few years now on how to give people more control over their experience. One idea that we have experimented with publicly is called favorites, where you can pick a subset of people you want to have show up at the top of feed. Another we have been working on for months now is a chronological version of Instagram. I wish I had a specific month to tell you right now, but right now we are targeting the first quarter of next year

Senator THUNE. OK. And we would like to take what you are proposing to do and codify it. And that is what the Filter Bubble Act does. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator BLACKBURN. Senator Luján, you are recognized.

STATEMENT OF HON. BEN RAY LUJÁN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW MEXICO

Senator LUJÁN. Thank you very much, Chair Blackburn, and want to thank everyone for calling this important hearing as well to our Chair and to our Ranking Member. Tomorrow, I will also be convening a hearing titled, disrupting dangerous algorithms, addressing the harms of persuasive technology in the Communications, Media, and Broadband subcommittee, where we will discuss legislative solutions to online amplification of content that spreads misinformation, threatens the mental and physical well-being of our children, and promotes extremism.

One of the lines of questions that I had today based on questions that came before from other colleagues earlier in this important hearing lies around data retention and deletion, and I think there was a line of questioning, from one of my colleagues as well. Does Instagram have in place practices to abide by the principle of data minimization, especially for sensitive personal information?

Mr. MOSSERI. Yes, Senator.

Senator LUJÁN. Can you provide those to the Committee?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I would be happy to follow up with that.

Senator LUJÁN. That is a yes?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, yes, I will get the exact details on what we do and follow up with the Committee.

Senator LUJÁN. Appreciate that. How long does Instagram store data related to what websites users visit and what internal links they click from inside the app?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I apologize. I do not know that offhand, but again, I would be happy to get back to you with the specifics there.

Senator LUJÁN. Do you know how long Instagram stores location information for a user?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, if you post a photo that has a location, it will say that location on that photo, so that will be stored for as long as that photo is up. In other cases, I assume we have retention policies that are quite short. We will get back to you with the specifics, but it will depend on the usage of location data.

Senator LUJÁN. When was the last time Instagram reviewed and updated its data decision, deletion and retention policies?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, we operate as one company, so would be for both Instagram and Facebook, so we wouldn't—there wouldn't be a specific retention policy for Instagram. I don't know the last time the policies were specifically updated, but I can tell you that we are constantly working on privacy, making sure that we can do more to empower people to protect their own data, making sure that we are compliant with the increasing number of privacy regulations around the world.

Senator LUJÁN. Would you support Federal policy legislation that enforces data retention limits and data deletion requirements?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, not only would we support that, but we believe it is important for there to be privacy regulation here in the U.S. and that is something that we have been very public about for years now.

Senator LUJÁN. When users request to download their data from Instagram, are users given all information that the company holds on them, including assumptions that the company has about them based on their behavior?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, when you download your data, we give you everything that is associated with you as far as I know, but I want to make sure I double check that. There are certain instances where—actually I can't think of any exceptions, but I will get back to you.

Senator LUJÁN. So the other way that I would ask that question and maybe it requires follow up is, is there any information that Instagram does not share with users when they request their data?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, we do our best to share all the data, all your data when you asked to download your data. As we add new features, we add them to what we call download your data to make sure that you have all the data.

Senator LUJÁN. Instagram has the option for users to request to delete their data that Instagram holds. Is that correct?

Mr. MOSSERI. Yes. And if you delete your account, you can delete your data if you request it.

Senator LUJÁN. Is there any data that Instagram holds from a user after a user deletes their information?

Mr. MOSSERI. Not that I know of Senator, no.

Senator LUJÁN. Is that something you can get back to me on as well?

Mr. MOSSERI. Absolutely. But I can also assure you that we do all we can to delete all your data, if you ask us to. To do otherwise would be incredibly problematic.

Senator LUJÁN. I appreciate that. There was a question that I asked Mr. Zuckerberg back in 2017 about Facebook's collection behavior about non-users, to which he responded to me that Facebook did not collect non-user information. Facebook, about a week later released a correction to that that Mr. Zuckerberg must have been mistaken or had a lapse in how he responded to that particular question.

But nonetheless, I really want to get to the bottom of that, especially with the rampant collection of data from individuals as well. And then the last question, Madam Chair that I will submit into the record because I am out of time now is the work that has to be done in non-English language disinformation and misinformation. It is a huge problem. I think it is important for Facebook, for Instagram, and Meta, and I get confused with which term I should be using here with rebranding. I guess I am not so good with it, but——

Mr. MOSSERI. I am comfortable with any term you would prefer.

Senator LUJÁN [continuing]. That we are able to get disaggregated data as we requested in this hearing from a Facebook witness, and we still have not been responded to. And I think it is very important for the Committee's wishes to be respected, which are done in a bipartisan way.

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I appreciate that point. Since we talked about that the other day, I have started to look into that. There are a number of ways we might be able to break out data around our Community Standards Enforcement policy.

It is possible—one possibility is what language the content is in, another possibility is what language the person who sees that content speaks, another possibility is what country. And so we are going to get back to you on what we think is the most efficient and responsible thing we can do in this space. And I will personally make sure that we do that and get back to you promptly.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thanks, Senator Luján. Senator Lee.

STATEMENT OF HON. MIKE LEE,
U.S. SENATOR FROM UTAH

Senator LEE. Mr. Mosseri, does Instagram advocate weight loss or plastic surgery for teenage girls under the age of 18?

Mr. MOSSERI. Sorry, Senator, I apologize, I missed the second word on the question. Does what—?

Senator LEE. Does Instagram advocate for, does it recommend weight loss or plastic surgery for girls under the age of 18?

Mr. MOSSERI. Absolutely not. We don't recommend an eating disorder related content to people of any age.

Senator LEE. Very glad to hear that. I beg to differ here. Leading up to this hearing, I have heard about a lot of complaints from peo-

ple across Utah and elsewhere who have told me about inappropriate content available through the explore page on Instagram, available specifically to children. And so I was encouraged to look into it myself. So I had my staff create a fictitious 13 year old account for a fictitious 13 year old girl.

The explore page yielded fairly benign results at first when all we did was create the account, knowing that it was a 13-year-old girl. But Instagram also provided that same account for this fake 13-year-old that included a list of recommendations of accounts that we should follow, including multiple celebrities and influencers. So we followed the first account that was recommended by Instagram, which happened to be a very famous female celebrity. Now, after following that account, we went back to the explore page and the content quickly changed.

You see right at first, all that came up when we opened up the account were some fairly benign hairstyling videos. But that is not what we saw after we followed this account, the account that was recommended by Instagram itself, and it expanded into all sorts of stuff, including content that was full of unrealistic standards for women, including plastic surgery and commentary on women's height, content that could be detrimental to the self-image of any 13-year-old girl.

And if you need any kind of evidence on the kinds of harms that this can produce, you can look to the report that I recently issued through my Joint Economic committee team, specifically on this topic last week.

So, Mr. Mossier, why did following Instagram's top recommended account for a 13-year-old girl cause our explore page to go from showing really innocuous things like hairstyling videos to content that promotes body dysmorphia, the sexualization of women, and content otherwise unsuitable for a 13 year old girl. What happened?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, eating disorder related content, or eating disorders more broadly are very complicated and difficult issues in society. Without——

Senator LEE. And they are complicated enough without a social media site recommending it.

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I have personally spoken to teens in multiple countries around the world that use Instagram to get support when suffering from things like eating disorders.

We absolutely do not want any content that promotes eating disorders on our platform. We do our best to remove it. I believe, and I will get back to the specifics of that, it is roughly 5 in every 10,000 things viewed. And my responsibility, as the Head of Instagram, is to get to that number to as close to zero as possible.

But we believe that every company, Snapchat, TikTok, YouTube should be public like we are about exactly what the prevalence of important content problems are on our platform.

Senator LEE. Right. I get that. And I can only take your word for it here. I understand what you are saying about the overall numbers. That is not how it appeared on this account. That is not how it happened at all. It was hairstyling videos and innocuous stuff 1 minute. The next minute, after we followed a famous female

celebrity, it changed, and it went dark fast. It was not 5 in 1,000 or 5 in 10,000.

It was rampant. The thing that gets me is, what changed was following this female celebrity account, and that female celebrity account was recommended to this 13-year-old girl. So why are you recommending that somebody follow a site with the understanding that by doing that, you are exposing that girl to all sorts of other things that are not suitable for any child?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I appreciate the question because it is an incredibly important and difficult space. If we recommended something that we shouldn't have, I am accountable for that. I am the Head of Instagram. But you said a second ago, you have to take my word for it, and I don't believe you should.

Our first Community Standards Enforcement Report, sorry, we have been doing it for years, but this next quarter, this quarter we are in right now, is going to be independently audited by Ernst & Young, and we are committed to doing independent audits going forward.

Senator LEE. That is great, and I have independently audited myself. And what I am saying to you is I will take your word for it as to the 5 in 1,000, 5 in 10,000 point. What I am saying is it was decidedly not 5 in 1,000 or 5 in 10,000 on this page for this for poor unsuspecting, albeit fake, 13-year-old girl.

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator——

Senator LEE. That is a concern. Look, I am running out of time, but I am also running out of patience from a company that has told us over and over and over again, we are so concerned about your children, we are so concerned, we are commissioning a blue ribbon study to be done or we are doing a review and stuff like this is still happening.

Meanwhile, the Tech Transparency Project, TTP recently conducted another experiment demonstrated how miners can use their instrument Instagram accounts to search for prescription and illicit drugs and connect with drug dealers. In fact, according to TTP, it only took two clicks, two clicks to find drug dealers on that platform. So, why are children's accounts even allowed to search for drug content to begin with, much less allowed to do so in a way that leads them to a drug dealer in two clicks?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, accounts selling drugs or any other regulated goods are not allowed on the platform.

Senator LEE. Apparently they are.

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, respectfully, I don't think you can take one or two examples and indicate that that is indicative of what happens in the platform more broadly, which is why—and I want to be clear——

Senator LEE. No, but it only took two clicks.

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator. I am not familiar with that specific report. I am more than happy to look into it. I do want to be clear though, because I have been talking about the Community Standards Enforcement Report a lot, and I know it sounds like numbers. And I know behind every one of those numbers is a person who is experiencing something difficult.

So I don't want to sound callous in any way. So if there is room for us to improve, I embrace that. That is why we invest more than

I believe anybody else, [redacted], over 40,000 people. That is why we believe in industry standards and industry accountability.

And that is why we are calling on the entire industry, YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, to come together to set industry standards that are approved by regulators like here in the U.S. in order to make the Internet more safer for not only kids online, but for everyone.

Senator LEE. There is a scene from the movie *Monty Python and the Holy Grail.* There is a big fight. Somebody concludes the discussion by saying, "look, let's not bicker and argue about who killed who here." I think we have to reach the point where we realize some real bad stuff is happening, and you are the new tobacco, whether you like it or not, and you have got to stop selling the tobacco, in quotation marks, to kids. Don't let them have it, don't give it to them. Thank you.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thanks, Senator Lee. Senator Sullivan.

STATEMENT OF HON. DAN SULLIVAN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM ALASKA

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for holding this important hearing and a series of hearings that you and the ranking member have been holding. Mr. Mosseri, have you read the Surgeon General's report that he issued yesterday, protecting youth mental health?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I have started to read it, I haven't quite finished it from where my read so far. It makes it clear that teens in this country are struggling,——

Senator SULLIVAN. Let me, I will get into it a little bit.

Mr. MOSSERI. Yes, Senator.

Senator SULLIVAN. I agree. A very sobering reading. It mentions in 2021, emergency room visits for suicide attempts by adolescent girls are 51 percent, 51 percent. I mean, that is just shocking. And the surgeon general said our obligation is to act. It is not just medical; it is moral.

So, the way I have read it, it is kind of a witch's brew of two things that are driving so much of these horrendous statistics related to mental health and suicide. It has been the pandemic in the negative impacts of social media. That is in the report. One of the recommendations from the surgeon general is limiting social media usage. Do you agree with that?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I will answer that question, but first, I want to be clear that I don't believe the research shows that social media is driving the rise in suicides.

Senator SULLIVAN. Wait, but why do you think the Surgeon General of the United States who just issued a 53-page report on mental health and teen suicides, said that we should limit social media to help get out of this crisis?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, from what I have read of the surgeon general's report so far, it is about a number of different issues, not just suicides. So just to make a connection between one problem that he talks about and one of the recommendations he makes I think is a bit of a leap.

Senator SULLIVAN. Let me ask my question again. The Surgeon General of the United States makes his recommendations to ad-

dress what clearly is a mental health crisis for teenagers, particularly teenage girls in America. One of his recommendations is to limit social media usage. So do you agree with him?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, two things. One is——

Senator SULLIVAN. Answer the question.

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator. I believe parents should be able to set limits for their children because I believe a parent knows best, which is why we have developed or why we are currently developing parental controls that let parents not only see how much time their teens spend on Instagram but set limits. I also——

Senator SULLIVAN. Let me just add, I mean this is a really important question because if we have experts saying we need to limit social media usage, which is what the surgeon general just said yesterday, to help address mental health issues, does that go against the business model of Instagram or Facebook or Meta? Isn't your business model to get more eyeballs for a longer time on social media? Isn't that what you are about?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, if people don't feel good about the time that they spend on our platform, if for any other reason people want to spend less time on our platform, I have to believe that it is better for our business over the long run.

Senator SULLIVAN. Do you make more money when people spend more time on your platform or less?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, on average, we make more money when people spend more time on our platform because we are an advertising business.

Senator SULLIVAN. Right. So, but you agree with the surgeon general that people should limit their social media usage. My point is they seem to be in direct contradiction with each other: what the surgeon general is saying, we need to better the health of our young Americans and what your basic business model proposition is. They seem to be actually colliding with each other.

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, respectfully, I disagree. I think the important thing is to distinguish between the short term and the long term. Over the long run, it has to be better for us as a business for people to feel good about the time that they spend on our platform. It has to be better for us as business, for parents to not only have a meaningful amount of control but be able to exercise their control over how much time their teens spend on our platform. And so we take a very long view on this, which is why——

Senator SULLIVAN. Do you have internal data relating to mental health and suicide and usage on your platform or Facebook or Meta?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, we do research to make Instagram better and safer. And as a parent, that is exactly what I would want. I believe we lead the industry and do more than anyone else on suicide.

Senator SULLIVAN. Yes. You are not answering my question. Just answer—do you have an internal data related to the issue of teen suicide and usage of your platform?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I am not sure I am understand your question specifically, but yes, we do research and we talk to third party experts and academics about difficult issues like suicide, which is inspired work like not allowing any content that talks about the

methods of suicide, connecting people who seek out that type of content with expert backed resources, and if someone looks like they are at risk of hurting themselves, proactively reaching to local emergency services on their behalf, not only here in the U.S., but in a number of countries around the world.

Senator SULLIVAN. Mr. Chairman, I am just—one final question. Can I ask very quickly, I looked into a little bit of this issue of your announcement on Instagram for kids and just that phrase kind of makes me nervous. It sounds like a gateway drug to more usage. Why did you put a pause on that and are you going to permanently pause that? And do you worry that you are going to get now kids hooked on more usage with Instagram for Kids?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, the idea is trying to solve a problem. We know that 10 to 12 year olds are online. Your average age, I believe when you get a cell phone in this country, is currently 11 or 10. We know that they want to be on top of things like Instagram, and Instagram, quite frankly, wasn't designed for them.

So the idea was to give parents the option to give their child an age appropriate version of Instagram, where they could control not only how much time that they spent, but who they could interact with and what they could see. It was always going to be a parent's decision.

Now I personally, as the Head of Instagram, am responsible for Instagram, and I decided to pause that project so that we could take more time to speak to parents, experts, and to policymakers to make sure that we get it right.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thanks, Senator Sullivan. Senator Young by WebEx.

STATEMENT OF HON. TODD YOUNG,
U.S. SENATOR FROM INDIANA

Senator YOUNG. Thank you, Chairman. Welcome Mr. Mosseri. In Ms. Haugen's testimony, she discussed how Instagram generates self-harm and self-hate, especially for vulnerable groups like teenage girls. Now I happen to have three young daughters and two teenage daughters, and this issue hits home to me, but it hits home to a lot of Americans. So you are here today, you are the Head of Instagram, and you have an opportunity to tell your side of the story.

And I do believe that if we are not receiving some constructive, actionable, and bold measures to deal with what is popularly believed to be a serious and significant public health issue, Congress will act because our constituents insist that we act. We have held a lot of hearings now. We have done our best to educate ourselves. But frankly, since you run the platform, since you know the technology, since you spend so much time working on these matters, you can really help us.

If you don't, we are going to feel an imperative to act. So that is just the reality of it. So with that said, with that foundation laid, do you believe there are any short-term or long-term consequences of body image or other issues on your platform?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I appreciate the question. The research that we have found shows that many teens use Instagram to get

support when suffering from issues like body image issues. For 11 out of 12 issues for teenage girls, and for 12 out of 12, issues like body image, anxiety, and depression, we found more teens who are struggling find that Instagram made things better than worse.

The one exception was body image for teenage girls, which is why I personally—actually before we even did this research, started the social comparison team that researchers inspired ideas like Take a Break, which launched this week, and nudges, which we are currently working on, which encourages you to switch topics if you spend too much time in any one topic. I am not here to say that there is only one perfect solution, but just to give an update on what the research says and what we are doing to make Instagram safer.

Senator YOUNG. Got it. I am familiar with nudges. I am somewhat familiar with behavioral science, I know that is something that can be harnessed by our tech community to generate traffic. What is engagement based ranking, Mr. Mosseri?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I appreciate the question. I have worked on ranking and algorithms for years. That term is often used to describe trying to connect people with content that they find interesting. So what we do when you open up Instagram, is we look at all of the posts from all of the people that you or the accounts that you follow, and we try and show you the one that you find the most relevant, and we try to make sure to take out anything that might be against our community guidelines in order to keep people safe. At a high level, that is usually what people refer to when they say engagement based ranking to the best of my knowledge.

Senator YOUNG. So is there a behavioral bias for teenage girls to look disproportionately at content that adversely impacts their self-image?

Mr. MOSSERI. Not that I know of, Senator. I do think that it is important that teens don't have negative experiences on our platform. I do think it is important that we try to understand the issue that you are raising, which I appreciate, which is negative social comparison or body image social comparison. And we are trying to understand how we can best help and support those who might be struggling.

Senator YOUNG. So there is no negativity bias, just as adults have a negative news bias, which is why so much of the news and current events coverage online can be so caustic and so corrosive to our public discourse because so often people marinate in the negative. But there is no similar bias that you have discovered, and I want to hear from one from any of your internal experts pertaining to negative self-image for teenage girls.

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator—sorry to interrupt you, Senator. Senator, I appreciate the question. I think it is important to call out that social media allows you to connect with anyone you are interested.

And in a world where the definition of beauty here in the United States used to be very limited and very focused on a very unrealistic definition of beauty, social media platforms like Instagram have allowed, or not allowed, but have helped important movements like body positivity to flourish so that if you are a teenage girl of color or if you are a plus size teenage girl, you can see models of color, plus size models.

It has helped diversify the definitions of beauty, and that is something that we think is incredibly important. I don't know of any specific bias, to answer your question very directly, but I want to call out that we help people reach a more diverse set of not only definitions of beauty, but points of view and perspectives.

Senator YOUNG. Do you have behavioral scientists who work internal to Instagram?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, we have data scientists who try and understand how people use the platform in order to make Instagram both better and safer.

Senator YOUNG. And they would inform you, I presume—but I don't want to presume, I want to get you on the record. They would be informing you if they ever discovered a negativity bias in the research or in the behaviors of your user community as it relates to teenage girls and self-harm or self-hate, right?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I expect my today to data scientists as I expect my researchers to keep me abreast of any important developments with regards not only to safety but to Instagram and the industry more broadly.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thanks, Senator Young.

Senator YOUNG. Thank you.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Senator Lummis.

STATEMENT OF HON. CYNTHIA LUMMIS,
U.S. SENATOR FROM WYOMING

Senator LUMMIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Companies like Instagram are often designing technology to maximize the collection of our data and subsequently sell visibility into its users private lives and interests.

That is why when a company called Signal bought advertisements designed to show us the information it collects and sells about us, those ads were banned by Instagram's parent company. It is the black box of highly secretive algorithmic systems that companies like Instagram deploy that operate largely undetected by the user and which allow them to continue to operate free of meaningful scrutiny. This is not an open source system.

Sunlight disinfects and Congress must not scroll past this critical moment without properly addressing the harms young people are encountering on these platforms. Mr. Mosseri, thank you for being here. In your testimony, you stated that Instagram has limited advertisers' options for serving ads to people under 18 to age, gender, and location.

But your testimony neglects to mention that any similar prohibition on Instagram's own machine learning ad delivery system. Does Instagram's machine learning ad delivery system target ads to children using factors other than age, gender, and location?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I appreciate the question. There is one ads delivery system both for Instagram and for Facebook. We only allow advertisers to target those under 18 based on age, gender, and location, and overall, the system also uses activity that teens use within the app to make sure that ads are relevant to teens.

Senator LUMMIS. OK, so you don't limit yourselves. You hold yourselves to a lower standard than your advertisers?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, we do limit ourselves and that we don't use any off-platform data, but we do also use activity in the apps to make sure that ads are relevant. For instance, if I am not interested in a specific band because it is around the part of the country or because I don't like that type of music, it doesn't make sense for me to see that type of band.

Senator LUMMIS. So, Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record a report from Fair Play that shows Meta is still using an AI delivery system to target ads at children.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Without objection.

[The information referred to was unavailable at time of printing.]

Senator LUMMIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Your Head of Safety and well-being, Vaishnavi J., recently stated that "any one piece of content is unlikely to make you feel good or bad or negative about yourself. It is really when you are viewing, say 20 minutes of that content or multiple pieces of that content in rapid succession that may have a negative impact on how you feel."

So to me, her Statement says that your company knows the time spent on the platform increases the likelihood of real world negative impacts. So how do you square a business model that prioritizes user time and engagement with knowing there is a direct correlation between time and harm?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, respectfully, using our platform more will increase any affect, whether it is positive or negative. We try and connect people with their friends, we try to help them explore their interests, we even try to help them start new businesses. But if people don't feel good about the time that they spend on our platform, that is something I personally take seriously and why we build things like daily limits, and why we are currently working on parental controls that are focused on time.

Senator LUMMIS. Does Instagram make money from ads that are seen when placed next to highly viewed and viral but also harmful content that violates the rules of your platform?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, we don't allow content that violates our rules on the platform. We release publicly how effective we are at removing that content, and we receive revenue based on ads shown.

Senator LUMMIS. OK, so is the money returned to the advertisers then?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, not that I know of, no.

Senator LUMMIS. Is it your position that Instagram will always comply with the laws of the country in which it operates?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, we are going to do our best to always comply with the law.

Senator LUMMIS. OK. Will you commit to releasing those guidelines to members of this committee?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, apologies, which guidelines?

Senator LUMMIS. It would be guidelines related to how you comply. So let me give you an example. If an authoritarian regime submitted a lawful request for your platform to censor political dissidents, would you comply? And if not, what are your guidelines on something like that? Here's—let me give you some real world examples. If a Government, let's say Uganda, criminalizes homosexuality. And if the Government submitted a lawful request for a

data on users that are members of the LGBT community, would Instagram comply?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, we try and use our best judgment in order to keep people safe. I also believe that transparency on this specific issue is incredibly important. I will double check and get back to your office, but I believe we also are public about incoming requests we get at a high level.

Senator LUMMIS. So one of the reasons that I am concerned about the fact that this is sort of secretive data collection based on a non-open source algorithm is because it gives you that veil of secrecy. People don't know what information is being collected about them.

Yet, if a hostile Government is able to identify people like women who are learning against the law, being educated against the law, or someone who is homosexual in a Government where homosexuality is punishable by death, and there are Governments that do this, if you turn over that data and it is collected by artificial intelligence, that artificial intelligence is not going to discern that they are putting a human being in danger. These platform—artificial intelligence, when not guided and not open sourced, can be a real problem. Mr. Chairman, thank you. I yield back.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thanks, Senator. Senator Cantwell.

STATEMENT OF HON. MARIA CANTWELL,
U.S. SENATOR FROM WASHINGTON

The CHAIR. Thank you, Chairman Blumenthal, and thank you to you and Senator Blackburn for this fabulous hearing. I know we have had great attendance from members. I am so impressed by the questions that all our colleagues have been asking, so I hope it will lead us to some good legislative solutions. And appreciate Mr. Mosseri—is that the right way to saying, Mosseri?

Mr. MOSSERI. That is just great.

The CHAIR. OK, for being here today. Obviously a big new day on the job. So I wanted to ask you specifically about privacy violations. Do you believe that claims of privacy violations by kids should go to arbitration? I mean, that is, do you believe that when people are signing up for your service when their 14 year olds, they understand that they are giving away their rights when they sign up to your service?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, respectfully, I disagree with the characterization that anyone gives away their rights when they sign up for our service. I think people—I think privacy is incredibly important and we do the best we can, and we invest a lot of resources in making sure we respect people's privacy.

The CHAIR. So if a child has suffered harm of the magnitude and they tried to try to get those issues addressed, do you think there should be an arbitration?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I am not sure I understand the exact hypothetical, but I do believe if a child is at risk specifically of hurting themselves——

The CHAIR. No, one of my constituents was working with a mother whose 14 year old daughter was groomed by adults on Instagram, ultimately was lured into sex trafficking and taken across State lines for prostitution. Under Instagram's terms of

service, Instagram can argue that a child's only recourse against Instagram's failure to provide a safe environment would be an arbitration, with no open court, no discovery, no judge, no jury, no appeal. So I am asking you what you think about when real harm is created against children and what should be the process?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, that story is terrifying. We don't allow child or human trafficking of any kind. We try to be as public as we can about how well we do on difficult problems like that one. And we believe that we should be—-there should be industry standards, there should be industry wide accountability, but the best way to do that is Federal legislation, which is specifically what I am proposing today.

The CHAIR. On this point—what we are trying to get at is that when users, in this case particularly young children, are signing up for service, what they are signing up to and a check mark is that you are signing up to binding arbitration with the company. So if there is a dispute about something that happened, and yes, we have been considering privacy legislation, our colleagues here have been trying to protect young children in other ways, and we have certainly found some very egregious situations of late, the only recourse they have is to go into binding arbitration with you as a company.

And we are saying when there is something as egregious as a privacy violation, that they should have other recourse. I am just simply asking you whether you believe they should have other recourse.

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I appreciate the question. I believe the most responsible approach in this area more broadly, not only for privacy but for safety, is Federal regulation here in the U.S.

The CHAIR. Do you think everybody has to go through you or one of your other software ask companies to get redress? Do you think that the only redress consumers should have is through binding arbitration with the company?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I believe that whatever the law states should apply to all companies like ours equally.

The CHAIR. I am asking you what you think as a company?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I am not familiar with the specific——

The CHAIR. OK, I am going to ask you for the record, and then that way you will get a little more time and you can consider it. But these are serious issues about the fact that serious issues are happening to children and the only redress they have is to go into binding arbitration with you.

And I think while that might be like, hey, I don't like your service or something happened or you overcharged me or this happened, that might be great for binding arbitration, but serious harm to people I don't think should be sent to binding arbitration. OK, back to the advertising question if we could for a second.

My colleagues have done a really good job of asking about this, but obviously people have been talking about the ability to make money off of specific content, whether in the Facebook that was described as potential reach metric. I think we have been talking about that, right, people have been discussing that. Are you aware of inaccuracies in the potential reach metric?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I am not aware of any specific inaccuracies, but we do our best we can to make sure advertisers understand reach before they spend using tools like that.

The CHAIR. Do you think that there is hate speech that is not taken down by—that is included in that? Would you agree that informing advertisers in the public, how much hate speech there is, or if it is taken down or not taken down?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, respectfully, I believe the potential reach tool allows you to get a sense of how many people you will reach, which is different than how much content on hate speech content specifically. In our Community Standards Enforcement Report, you can see that I believe 3 in 10,000 pieces of content seen qualify as hate speech by our definition.

The CHAIR. Do you think that advertising can be inaccurate, or misleading based on certain metrics?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, as an advertising business, I believe it is in our interest to be as accurate as possible. I think whenever we make mistakes, we know that undermines our credibility and advertising businesses are based on trust.

The CHAIR. Right. And they are also based on being truthful to your advertisers. And so what I am getting at is Ms. Haugen came to testify before the Committee. She is saying that Facebook purposely made a decision to keep up metrics that drove more traffic, even though she knew that they—that the company knew that it included things that were related to hate speech. That that certainly motivated more traffic. And when presented with the information, the company and various members of the company decided to continue using that metric.

And so what I am saying, there could be instances where Instagram has also continued to have advertisers not fully aware. So do you believe advertisers should be aware if there was any content that was related to hate speech that they should be aware that that metric—that they should be aware of what content they are being served with?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I believe advertisers should have access to data about how much hate speech there is on the platform, just like everyone should be have access to that kind of data. I am not—I don't believe, actually I am not familiar with what you are specifically referencing with regard to her testimony, but it doesn't line up with any of my experience through my 13 years here at the company that we would intentionally mislead advertisers. That would be a gross violation of trust, and it would inevitably come out and undermine our credibility.

The CHAIR. So you don't think there is any deceptive practices with advertisers that you are involved in at Instagram?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, not only do I not believe that, I think that would be——

The CHAIR. Do you think advertisers know everything about your algorithm and what it is attached to in giving them page views and information?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I believe deeply in transparency. I have spent an immense amount of time over the years not only trying to be transparent about how our algorithms work, but also investing in making sure we are transparent about how much problem-

atic content is on the platform. And I believe you can see that in our Community Standards Report, and I believe other companies like Snapchat, TikTok, and YouTube should do the same.

The CHAIR. I see my time is way over, Mr. Chairman, but I am going to ask you questions for the record on this as well, because the point is if companies are involved in deceptive practices with advertisers and they haven't told them how they are artificially increasing their traffic and it is related to something that the advertisers aren't aware of, that is a deceptive practice. So thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you, Senator Cantwell. Thanks for your excellent work on this issue and your help and support in these hearings. Senator Cruz.

STATEMENT OF HON. TED CRUZ,
U.S. SENATOR FROM TEXAS

Senator CRUZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Mosseri, welcome. Thank you for being here. Thank you for testifying before the Committee and thank you for being here in person. As you are aware, I and many members of this committee have had significant concerns about Instagram's practices and Facebook's practices and big tech more broadly. In September 2021, The *Wall Street Journal* published a series of investigative articles titled "Facebook Files."

And as you know, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that researchers inside of Instagram found that 32 percent of teen girls using the product felt that Instagram made them feel bad about their bodies. The)*Wall Street Journal* further reported that 13 percent of British users and 6 percent of American users trace their desire to kill themselves to Instagram. Now, those are deeply troubling conclusions. Are you familiar with the research that was cited by *The Wall Street Journal*?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, yes, but if we are going to have a conversation about the research, I think we need to be clear about what it actually says. It actually showed that one out of three girls who suffer from body image issues find that Instagram makes things worse. And that came from a slide with 23 other statistics where more teens found that Instagram made things better. Now we have—doesn't mean it is not serious. And on suicide, it was actually, and any one life loss to suicide is an immense tragedy, but on suicide, it was 1 percent who trace their thoughts back to Instagram. And I think it is important that we are clear about what the research says.

Senator CRUZ. So I am glad to see that we found some common ground. You just said twice there, it is important for us to be clear what the research said. I agree. At prior hearings, I have asked your colleagues repeatedly for copies of the research, and to my knowledge, you have refused to produce it. Will you commit now to produce the research to this committee so we can, as you just said, be clear about what the research says?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I really appreciate this question because it is incredibly important that we are transparent about research. I can commit personally to doing all I can to release the data behind the research. The two challenges that I need to let you know

of are one, privacy in certain cases, and two, in often cases we do not have the data anymore due to our data retention policies.

But given that I can also commit to you that we will provide meaningful access to data, to third party researchers outside the company so that they can draw their own conclusions and design their own studies to understand the effects of not only Instagram or Facebook on well-being, and I think other companies should do the same.

Senator CRUZ. In what format was this research communicated to you? You just referenced a slide that had bullet points. I would love to see that slide. You criticize this committee for not appreciating the full contents of the research when you haven't given us the research. In what form did this research come to you? Was it a PowerPoint presentation? How was it memorialized and presented to you?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, there are two forms that the research comes in. I believe the most important is the data because that allows any researcher, and I am committed to making sure external researchers outside the company can do research and have access to that to draw their own conclusions, and then presentations like PowerPoint slides.

And the specific of that slide, we have actually made that slide public, but I believe the most important thing over time is that we provide regular access to meaningful data about social media usage across the entire industry, to academics and experts to design their own studies and draw their own conclusions. And that will take time because many of these studies can often take years, but it is something I am personally very committed to.

Senator CRUZ. Now, when you saw your own study, finding a significant percentage of girls reported that Instagram caused them to think about killing themselves, were you concerned by that finding?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, just to clarify, I believe the study said they trace their thoughts, but yes, I am concerned about anybody who feels worse about themselves after using the platform and certainly anyone, any one individual, because we are talking about people here not numbers, that has any suicidal thoughts.

Senator CRUZ. Well, let's talk about numbers for a second. Did Instagram do anything to quantify how many teenage girls have killed themselves because of your product?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, we do research and talk to third party experts about not only suicide, but self-harm on a regular basis. And that research has inspired much of our work to not only make sure that we have very clear policies——

Senator CRUZ. So did you quantify it or not?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I am not sure exactly what you would mean by quantifying the situation, but——

Senator CRUZ. Did you do research to estimate, to count how many teenage girls have taken their lives because of your product?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, we do research to understand problems and identify solutions, in the case of suicide, to make sure we take down suicide related content from the platform, to connect those seeking out this type of content with expert backed resources, and

to connect anyone who looks like they are a threat of hurting themselves with local emergency services.

Senator CRUZ. How did you change your policies as a result of this research to protect young girls?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I appreciate the question. We use research to not only change our policies, but to change our product on a regular basis. With regards to bullying, the research has inspired things like restrict, which allow you to protect yourself from someone who is harassing you without them knowing and limits because we learned that teens struggle during moments of transition.

With suicide and self-injury, we learned that we need to be incredibly careful because often teens suffering from these really difficult issues use Instagram to find support, and we need to make sure that they can find that support and talk about recovery while making sure we don't——

Senator CRUZ. So, look, big tech loves to use grand eloquent phrases about bringing people together. But the simple reality and why so many Americans distrust big tech is you make money the more people are on your product, the more people are engaged in viewing content, even if that is harmful to them, even if they are viewing every eyeball, you are making money. And when your colleagues have been asked the same question, as a result of this research, what policies did you change? This committee has been unable to get a straight answer to that question about what is different. And I think the reason for that is if you change policies to reduce the eyeballs, you would make less money as it is. Why is that inference not correct?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, if people don't feel safe on our platform, if people don't feel good about the time that they spend on our platform, over time they are going to use other services. Competition has never been fiercer, particularly here in the states with YouTube and TikTok and Snapchat. And so I have to believe that over the long run, it is not only incredibly important that we keep people safe, but we make sure people feel good about the time that they spend on our platform.

Senator CRUZ. So my time has expired, but I want to make sure I understand the commitment you made to this committee. As I understand it, you have committed to providing this committee with the raw data from the research you did on users of your product and in particular body image issues and tendencies toward suicide, and also with the PowerPoint presentations that memorialized that raw data. Is that correct that you will provide them to this committee?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, what I am committing to you is to do everything I can do to release that data——

Senator CRUZ. Is there a reason you can't do what I just said?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, the challenge on the data, which I think is the most important thing, is that in many cases, we no longer have it.

Senator CRUZ. How about the PowerPoint presentations? Will you give us the PowerPoint presentations?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I think the most responsible thing to do is to provide access to data to external researchers outside the company.

Senator CRUZ. We would like both. Is there a reason you are hiding the PowerPoint presentations? You said you wanted maximum transparency. Maximum transparency would be show us the presentations that were prepared for you. Presumably, you had some reason to trust them because they were prepared for your consumption.

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I believe you already have the presentations, which is why we are focused on the data. We think that any researcher should be able to draw their own conclusions based on the raw data. That is the most important and the most knowledgeable part of the process. Unfortunately, much of that data we no longer have due to data retention policies, which is why I am very committed to making sure that we can allow access to meaningful engagement data to researchers outside the company in the future to focus specifically on the effects of social media and well-being, and I am calling for the rest of the industry to do the same.

Senator CRUZ. So your commitment is to provide all of the data that you have, and the PowerPoint presentation summarized?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, my commitment is to provide meaningful access to data based on what researchers request, because I think that is the most responsible thing for us to do over the long run.

Senator CRUZ. OK, we are requesting right now.

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, for it—to do a study on the effects of well-being—I am sorry, the effects of social media on well-being, you would have to design that study. So I would like to talk to—we have even worked with Pew, we have worked with Harvard, we have worked with other organizations around the world. I would like to talk to the researchers and understand what specific data they would like access to. I can't just provide all data that we have. That is an untenable thing to do physically.

Senator CRUZ. The data that was the basis for the study quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* report. That is the data I am asking about, and the presentations that summarized the conclusions of that.

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I would love to provide that data. I am personally working on trying to find out if there is any way we can provide it in a privacy safe way and in a way where we still have it, and because I think that is important. I have been working on that. I don't want to overpromise and underdeliver here, which is why I am more focused on how we make sure researchers have access to data going forward.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thanks, Senator Cruz. I just want to say Mr. Mosseri, because you and I have discussed this point, the data sets are not enough. This answer is, in my view, just completely unsatisfactory. We want the studies. We want the research. We want the surveys. The whistleblower has disclosed a lot of it. And the answer that you have given, very respectfully, simply won't get it. It is in your files. If it was destroyed, we want to know about that, too. But information is absolutely the coin of the realm when we go about devising legislation.

And I must say there is a kind of disconnect here. Senator Sullivan asked you about content relating to suicidal or self-harm. I think I am quoting you almost directly, and you said there isn't any. Well, we have a teen account with all the protections on, the filters. We searched, "slit wrists," and the results, I don't feel I can describe in this hearing room. They are so graphic. That is within the past couple of days. I described to you an account that looked at, in effect, eating disorders and attracted the same deluge of self-harm and anorexia coaches.

So, I just feel that there is a kind of real lack of connection to the reality of what is there in the testimony that you are giving today, which makes it hard for us to have you as a partner and maybe we need to have some kind of compulsory process. You know, Senator Cruz and I don't always agree.

But on this point, on the need for information, I think you have heard here a bipartisan call for a reality check and for action. And the fact that this content continues to exist on the site despite your denials, I think, really is hard to accept. You know, Instagram suggested as a solution here to nudge teens. I don't know whether your kids have reached the teen age yet. It takes more than a nudge to move teens.

I am well beyond the teenage years of my four children, but if you said to a teen who was on Instagram, fixated on eating disorders, why don't you try snorkeling in the Bahamas, that nudge just won't work. And Instagram has a real asymmetric power here. It drives teens in a certain direction and then makes it very difficult for the teen, once in a dark place, to find light again and to get out of it.

So, my question to you is, don't we need enforceable standards set by an independent authority, not an industry body, objective, independent researchers with full access to your algorithms? Will you commit to support full disclosure of your algorithms and a commitment to an independent authority?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, we are actually—we are very aligned. We agree on the transparency—the importance of transparency, not only of how ranking works——

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Well, then you would make available all of the studies, like the ones that Frances Haugen presented to us when she was here.

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I am confident that we are more transparent than any other tech company in the industry.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. That is a pretty low bar, Mr. Mosseri. That is like you are in the gutter, forgive me, in terms of transparency, because they committed to make available their algorithms, but only after we pressed them to do it, and we still are awaiting full compliance.

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, we have been publishing research for years. We are going to publish over 100 things this year alone. I believe that there is an immense amount of data in our quarterly reports. I believe that we are going to start having them audited by Ernst & Young starting this quarter. I believe that our ads library provides more transparency in advertising than any other advertising business in any industry, tech or otherwise. Yes, I believe there is more to do.

Yes, I believe in Federal legislation. Yes, I believe that policymakers should be actively involved in that, and I am looking forward to having our teams work with yours on shaping exactly what that looks like.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Will you support the EARN IT Act?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, directionally we believe strongly in transparency and accountability. I am unfortunately not familiar with every provision in that Act, but more than happy to have our team work with you on that.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. If you believe what you have testified here, you would say, yes, I support the EARN IT Act.

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, respectfully, I don't think would be appropriately appropriate for me to commit to something that I haven't read in full. But I really do want our team to work with yours. As I have said, we are calling for industry wide regulation. We believe it is incredibly important. It is why we are having this hearing today. It is why I appreciate these questions, even though they are difficult at times because we believe there is nothing more important than keeping teens safe online. And we believe we need to come together and——

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Do you support prohibitions, bans on advertising and marketing to teens for products that are illegal for them to consume?

Mr. MOSSERI.—Senator, I believe we already prohibit that. So in the case of under 18 year olds, we don't provide—we don't allow ads for—we don't we don't allow ads for tobacco to any age, but we don't allow ads for things like gambling for under 18. We don't allow ads for alcohol for under 21.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Would you support legally enforceable prohibitions where you can be held liable?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, yes, we support industry standards and accountability, and I believe part of those industry standards, as I call out in my testimony, include age appropriate design, which will inevitably include content rules about what is appropriate.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. If you host child sexual abuse material, should the victims be able to sue you?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, child exploitation is an incredibly serious issue. I believe an earlier Senator mentioned how we could collaborate with NCMEC on this. I believe that we are going to continue to invest more than anyone else on this space. And I believe that Federal regulation is the best form of accountability with enforcement, to your point before.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I am going to turn to Senator Blackburn. I have a few more questions if we have time to get to them.

Senator BLACKBURN. Yes, and in the question about NCMEC, I wanted to know if you reported the traffickers. And I think that that is something important to do. You would need to come back to us on that. Also, you mentioned referring children to local authorities. You need to let us know how many are we talking about? Is it in the hundreds or thousands? Give us those numbers so that we have that data. Also, I would like to know how long you hold the data on your research?

You have mentioned you can't give us the data and then you said, "well, you may not have some of this data." We need to know

how long you are holding this data on minors, those children that you are data mining. And I was glad to hear you admit that you all are a big advertising business. I thought that that was helpful to our discussion.

You mentioned in response to Senator Lee's question that you hoped you did not sound callous when we were talking about children that take their life or that have lifelong problems because of what they have encountered on Instagram.

And sir, I have to tell you, you did sound callous, because every single life matters, every life matters. And this is why we need this research. I thought it is also interesting you basically give teen girls no recourse if they get into a dark spot using Instagram. But we have got a lot of parents that come to us, this is why we are doing these hearings, and they are concerned about how their children are going to be affected for the rest of their life.

And I asked you yesterday when we talked, if you ever talked to these parents whose children have taken their lives or have they ended up having to have mental health services because of what they have been incurred, and you said, yes, you do.

So I want to give you 1 minute. I speak to parents who are struggling. Their children have attempted suicide, or maybe some of them have taken their life.

So take the next minute and speak directly to these parents. Because as I told you yesterday, I have talked to a lot of parents. They have never heard one word from Instagram or Facebook or Meta, and they are struggling with this. Senator Cantwell brought this up to you. So, sir, the next 60 seconds, the floor is yours.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. You can have longer than a minute, if you would like.

Senator BLACKBURN. Speak to these parents because we are not talking to people that have ever had any kind of response from Instagram. And you have broken these children's lives and you have broken these parents' hearts are flawed. Floor is yours. Have at it.

Mr. MOSSERI. Thank you, Senator. Senator, I am a father of three. To any parent who has lost a child or even had a child hurt themselves, I can't begin to imagine what that would be like for one of my three boys. As the head of Instagram, it is my responsibility to do all I can to keep people safe.

I have been committed to that for years and I am going to continue to do so. Whether or not we invest more than every other company or not doesn't really matter for any individual, and if any individual harms themselves or has a negative experience on our platform that is something that I take incredibly seriously.

Now, I know I have talked a lot about parental controls. As I have said, I really do believe that a parent knows what is best for their child or guardian, but I also know that a lot of parents are busy. I have got three kids and I have a lot of support.

I can't imagine what it would be like to have four kids or three kids and be a single parent working two jobs. And so I don't want to rely on parental controls. I think it is incredibly important that the experience is safe and appropriate for your age, no matter what it is, 13, 15, 17.

But if you have the time and the interest, I also think as a parent you have the right to be able to understand what your kids are doing online, and you should have control to shape that experience into what is best for them. And if you don't have time, that is OK too. It is my responsibility to do all I can to help, not only to keep young people safe on our platform, but anybody who uses our platform.

Senator BLACKBURN. Mr. Mosseri, we are telling you, children have inflicted self-harm. They are getting information that is destroying their young lives. And we are asking you, have some empathy and take some responsibility. And it seems as if you just can't get on that path. So we are going to continue to work on this issue. I wish that your response had been a more empathetic response.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thanks, Senator Blackburn. I just have one more question, and I think we are going to make the 5 p.m. deadline. We want to be respectful of your time. I understand that it is important to have your internal discussions and debate, as any company must. But these studies and research are really important for parents to make decisions. And I am reminded of actually some work I did when I was State Attorney General in Connecticut. We were one of the first states, with the help of a company in Connecticut named Legos, to require warnings about small parts on toys, which I urged the Legislature to do as State Attorney General.

Then I fought the industry when it challenged that labeling and we won against challenges based on the Commerce Clause and other constitutional claims. And the Supreme Court denied certiorari, and then the industry decided it wanted a Federal standard because it didn't want to deal with state by state requirements. Well, the point was that the law required companies to disclose risks. It encouraged them to compete over values that were positive and that promoted safety.

And that is the kind of competition that we need in your industry. As Senator Klobuchar mentioned earlier, we have been working on antitrust measures to promote more competition so that maybe there will be some on safety, but disclosure, the disinfected in sunlight is so important. So my question to you is, would Instagram support legal requirements on social media platforms to provide public disclosures about the risks of harms, the risk of harms in content?

Mr. MOSSERI. Senator, I would support Federal legislation around the transparency of data, around the access to data from researchers, and around the prevalence of content problems on the platform. I think all of those are important ways that parents or anyone really can get a sense for what a platform is doing and what its effects on people are. I believe deeply that transparency is important, which is why I am confident we are going to continue to lead the industry on being incredibly transparent about what happens on our platform.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Well, you have said repeatedly that you are in favor of one goal or another directionally. And I find that term really incomplete when it isn't accompanied by specific commitments, a yes or a no. And we are going to move forward on this

committee, directionally with specifics. The kinds of baby steps that you have suggested so far, very respectfully, are underwhelming, a nudge, a break. That isn't going to save kids from the addictive effects.

And there is no question there are addictive effects of your platform, and I think you will sense on this committee pretty strong determination to do something well beyond what you have indicated you have in mind, and that is the reason that I think self-policing based on trust is no longer a viable solution. So we thank you for being here today. We are going to continue the effort to develop legislation. Many of us, Senator Markey, Senator Thune, Senator Klobuchar, myself, working with Senator Blackburn, who has been a great partner in this effort. This hearing record will remain open for two weeks.

If you feel you want to supplement any of your answers or my colleagues who would like to submit questions for the record, should do so by December 22. And we ask that your responses be returned to the Committee as quickly as possible and no more than two weeks after received. That concludes today's hearing. Thank you very much for being here. And I think we are pretty much on time. Thank you.

Mr. MOSSERI. Thank you, Chairman Blumenthal. Thank you, Ranking Member Blackburn. I appreciate your time.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 5:01 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT: EXPOSURE OF ADOLESCENT WHITE MALES IN APPALACHIA TO HARMFUL CONTENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Dr. Joel Beeson, Professor, Reed College of Media, West Virginia University

Prologue

My scholarship encompasses decades of historical research on racism during wartime in the nation, and digital forensic investigation of online radicalization in social media and gaming platforms. I've been a member of the Congressional Black Caucus Veterans Braintrust since 2008 and was invited in 2017 by the Hon. Charles Rangel to provide testimony on the historical parallels of the WWI era to the rising divisions, polarization, extremism and racism in our Nation's present. I am currently co-producing with my colleague (and spouse) a feature-length documentary film on the vectors of youth radicalization in the Appalachia region through the social media and gaming digital ecosystem.

Since 2016, we have been leading a team of researchers and investigative journalists at West Virginia University studying how social media and gaming platforms expose and radicalize youth in Appalachia (primarily on boys and young men ages 10–22). A significant component of this research has included data collection on harms to youth within Instagram specifically, uncovering a mix of violent, pornographic, misogynistic (including radical incel or "involuntarily celibate" content), racist and homophobic content targeted to youth and teens—often posed as jokes or memes. This toxic content is interspersed with benign content and serves to desensitize, manipulate, normalize and groom youth toward forms of extremism and violence. This research has been funded by grants from the Ford Foundation and the Democracy Fund.

From healthcare to the economy, lessons learned in Appalachia are broadly applicable on a national scale. Harmful, toxic content on social media in our region is no different.

JOEL BEESON

Introduction

Social media and smartphone use has become ubiquitous feature of teen's everyday life and culture. According to the 2018 Pew Research Center study, *Teens, Social Media and Technology,* 95 percent of adolescents have access to a smartphone, while 45 percent say they are online on a near constant basis. Roughly nine-in-ten teens reported being online multiple times per day (Pew, 2018). In another recent study, nearly 80 percent of teens checked their smartphones at least hourly, while 50 percent of teens and nearly 60 percent of parents feel their teens are addicted to their devices (Felt & Robb, 2016). Social media is undoubtedly where adolescents spend most of their time online, and it is a dominant social space in the formation of teen culture.

For young people, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat and Tiktok are the most popular social media platforms. In the Pew study, 72 percent of teens reported using Instagram, a social media platform that relies on images as primary means of communication. A study of young adults using Instagram found that entertainment (diversion) and sharing image posts (social interaction) was the chief reason for using the app (Huang & Su, 2018). A key mode of visual messaging on Instagram is the widespread use and sharing of memes. In our research, we have identified memes as the primary conveyor of harmful content on Instagram.

The ironic, unsettled semiotic equations of memes enable their use in propaganda as a "ploy"—a sort of linguistic trojan horse—to throw so much doubt and chaos on its actual interpretation so that the user is unsure if it's a joke or not (Michigan Academician, 2021). The "It's just a prank, Bruh" disclaimer gives the author or publisher plausible deniability and ironic distance.

We documented anti-Semitic and Islamophobic speech and memes shared within an adolescent community in the years and months prior to the 2018 Tree of Life synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh and subsequently the Christchurch massacre at two mosques in 2019, killing 51 people and injuring 40, including children. This was a clarifying tragedy in which the shooter's own manifesto referenced the same "Sub to Pewds" (YouTube influencer PewDiePie) and other extreme right-wing memes circulating amongst middle and high schoolers in Appalachia and across the country. As we observed the online social worlds of youth communities in the region, we increasingly understood the path by which adolescent hate memes inevitably collided with real-world violence, regional and international networks of organized white supremacists, abetted by trolls, digital profiteers and the mechanics and economic model of the platforms themselves.

The impact and success of networked propaganda and memetic warfare has continued to be evident in the proliferation of disinformation and normalization of conspiracy theories in the COVID–19 pandemic era, and in the rise of armed and violent illegal militias and paramilitary groups—such as the so-called "Boogaloo Bois"—in the wake of Black Lives Matter protests in the summer of 2020.

Several scholars have recognized the importance of online spaces as an increasingly important vector of youth socialization. As Julia DeCook (2018, p. 485) argues in her study of memes used by the Proud Boys, a violent right-wing group:

> "The growth of digital technology and social media use among populations across the world has given rise to a new socializing institution for children, teenagers, and young adults (Alava, Frau-Meigs, and Hassan, 2017). These online platforms are places of civic engagement and political expression, particularly among youth, and thus have the potential to socialize youth into political ideologies and sensemaking processes of their worlds (Bennett *et al.,* 2012; Edgerly *et al.,* 2016)."

Kurek, Jose and Stuart (2019) observe that the online media landscape offers a unique social space for adolescents to explore identity formation in what Suler (2004) and others have termed "increased disinhibition" or the "freedom for dissociative self-expression." Studies have shown that most teens believe the online environment provides a space safe from criticism, judgement, or real-life consequences. (Bauman, 2010; Runions & Bak, 2015 and Suler, 2004). Teens confess to sharing a different self-identity offline compared to online (*Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010*). In a developmental stage where the formation of self and anxieties about sexual and gender identity can be difficult, confusing and uncertain, adolescents are uniquely susceptible to manipulation and disinformation.

In interviews and collaboration with sociologists, psychologists, public health professionals, we concur that these online effects comprise a moral injury to affected youth.

Other scholars have identified how online spaces are used to prey on boys in particular, and we suggest the notion of "self-radicalized" individuals belies the complexities of an entire ecosystem of influences—one in which they are targeted, exposed, and socialized to normalized, incentivized dehumanizing content over hours, weeks, months and years.

According to a review of current research, evidence suggests that exposure to radical or violent online material is associated with a higher risk of committing political violence offline (Hassan, et. al, 2018). The review found that extremist groups disproportionately target youth for recruitment with "narratives that resonate with their grievances and need for belonging and excitement" (p.72). Because adolescence is a period of searching for identity, those youth without a sense of belonging or positive national identity are considered at a higher risk for radicalization. As Cynthia Miller-Idriss (2020) writes, "almost all recent research finds the 'need for belonging' is key to extremism, along with a need for control." Our current research on adolescent exposure to right-wing extremism and white supremacy online bears out these observations.

Research Methods and Results

Digital Ethnography

From 2017 to 2021, we have observed actual teen Instagram accounts, mapping networks of harmful content regionally and ties to their global connections. We have collected and looked at the material semiotics of memes circulating authentically in Appalachian youth culture.

Focus Groups and Interviews

Throughout 2019 and 2020 we conducted seven focus groups and numerous individual interviews with young males in West Virginia (ages 11–19, with middle and

high school students, as well as one group of college freshman. This research revealed that Instagram is the teens' overwhelmingly favorite social media platform for interacting with peers specifically for entertainment. In addition, most reported being exposed to hate speech or traumatic content online and expressed the sentiment that it was simply normal—a "natural" feature of the Internet and social media.

Focus groups with teachers, school technologists, and interviews of affected groups, including religious and racial minorities, revealed that this online content spilled over into real-world behavior in schools. Two siblings in high school had this exchange with an interviewer:

> Interviewer: "Okay. Have you heard friends or other students say anything about Nazis from memes and games, just joking?"
> Both: "Yes."
> Teen 2: "I think also because we're Jewish."
> Teen 1: "I hear a lot of people just walking the halls at my school, I hear a lot of groups of people joke about things like that. I've even had friends say that in conversations I'm in who know that I'm Jewish. I think it probably just slips their mind or something. It's not that I'm going to be like 'oh you said that' but I would prefer if they wouldn't say that in front of me."
>
> Interviewer: "So, what kinds of things do they say?"
> Teen 1: "Just like Hitler jokes and different things about Jews."
> Teen 2: "Yes like Holocaust jokes."
>
> Interviewer: "If you could put a number on it, how frequently does that occur?"
> Teen 2: "I've at least heard it daily. I don't think it's been directed at me daily, but I've definitely heard it daily when I'm at school. "

Surveys

In addition to focus groups, we conducted anonymous, text-based surveys of nearly 300 middle and high school students in six schools in West Virginia. A little more than one-half of students (51 percent) said that Instagram was the platform of choice for sharing memes. Nearly three-quarters (72 percent) reported being exposed to memes that they regarded as hate speech, which we operationally defined as "harmful content targeted to groups based on race, religion, class, sexual orientation or disability." Written responses elaborating on this question were as follows:

- "I see a lot of memes targeting Jews."
- "People use African American, Latino, and white stereotypes as jokes."
- "They say the N word and I partake in the slop."
- "There are memes that make jokes about kids on the autism spectrum."
- "It's funny because it's offensive."
- "Yes, Muslims exploding."
- "Memes making fun of SIMPS (suckers idolizing mediocre pussy)."
- "Memes about the Coronavirus and the Asian race."
- "Of course. I've seen memes targeting blacks, whites, Asians, communist, etc. They'll be jokes or stereotypes. But you have to take them like a grain of salt. There's just jokes."

When asked if they had ever reported this content to the platform or told an adult parent, guardian or teacher, 72 percent said no. A sample of responses to this question indicate that teens feel that reporting hate speech is futile:

- "No, because no one does anything."
- "No, that's just stupid and what would they even do about it."
- "No, it's not offensive or a problem."
- "No why would I do that?"

The Instagram Experiment

Conventional wisdom and media myths focus on the actions of individuals, giving rise to ideas of the "lone wolf" who seeks out toxic content on the "dark web." Based upon observations, surveys and interviews of teens and their social media exposure, we felt like this was an inadequate explanation for the ubiquity of toxic and harmful content we observed in youth feeds and in off-line behavior.

We established a protocol designed to test the platform's and external actors' actions through Instagram algorithms that suggest content to users:

- Suggested Accounts—Instagram suggests accounts based upon algorithmic analysis of the user.
- Explore Feature—Instagram suggested posts, videos and stories based upon algorithmic analysis of the user.

We wanted to identify the how the platform curates content for a presumed 13-year-old boy in West Virginia. We also based the design of the protocol on the steps youth take in creating an Instagram account for the first time, which reveals their initial reliance on the suggestions of the platforms coupled with targeting by accounts that immediately begin to follow their new account. We followed setting up a 13-year-old boy's account based on their reported behavior:

> Interviewer: "What app is the one that is used most for sending memes?"
> Teen: "Instagram."
>
> Interviewer: "So, if you had to say like a ratio of how much time you spent on one app vs. another what would you say?"
> Teen: "I spend a lot more time on Instagram than I do any other app because that's like one of the ways I get ahold of people. Like, just going through and seeing what got posted."
>
> Interviewer: "How do you pick the people you follow?"
> Teen: "Say, if I just made an Instagram account and, like, the first person I followed, if you go to their account, it will say suggested. And then you, like, go in there and follow people from that."

To inhibit the variable of user influence and to help isolate the role of algorithms, we took minimal user actions. These steps in part included:

1. Set up burner phones with a new e-mail and Instagram account. This insured the device and account had no data history to affect suggestion and curating algorithms.
2. We created usernames based on information from teen interviews and focus groups about how youth decide on a username.
3. We followed a few popular official gaming accounts and regional sports accounts (Minecraft, Fortnite, Call of Duty and Mountaineer Football, The Red Cup and Mountaineer Maniacs) when first signing up to signal location and gender/age of the user.
4. We followed recommended meme accounts through Instagram's "Explore" and "Suggested Accounts" features.
5. We followed back accounts who followed us.
6. We took screenshots of harmful content.

When we first piloted the Instagram experiment in the summer of 2019, we expected to encounter harmful content in the span of weeks or months. Frankly, we were shocked to see this content appear within three or four days of being on Instagram for a few hours per day. Eight subsequent experiments during 2019 and 2020 confirmed that the actions of the platform algorithms, suggested accounts and explore features, and follows by other accounts –independent of user decisions or searches—leads to a mix of racist, antisemitic, homophobic, sexually explicit, ableist, misogynistic, Islamophobic and violent content in the form of memes.

This harmful media was intermingled with benign content, as well as memes calling for a return to traditional gender roles, masculinity and physical strength, orthodox Christianity and the Crusades, COVID–19 conspiracy memes and related natural health remedies and "wellness" content.

A member of our research team, after conducting an experiment session, reported that "it made me want to throw up and cry."

Discussion and Conclusions

Although this research is still in process, presented initially at the Social Science Research Council's program Extreme Right Radicalization Online: Platforms, Processes, Prevention, as well as in closed-door briefings to other researchers and mental health practitioners, we felt compelled to share excerpts for this hearing in light of Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen's revelations, as this work includes investigation into Instagram specifically and is relevant to the scope of this committee's investigation into online harm from social media platforms.

The scope of this research supports that in the current media ecosystem, where the dominant economic model of social media—the attention economy—drives machine learning algorithms to maximize the amount of time teens are on their devices and are interacting with social media platforms such as Instagram, has the

networked effect of indiscriminately amplifying content and topics that prioritize engagement. With teens, this content is often sensational and serves to manipulate teens natural developmental anxieties, fears and uncertainties about identity, sexuality, religion and spirituality, and most importantly, social belonging and acceptance. What is most striking is our observations of how few actions need to be taken by a user to encounter dangerous and toxic content. A recent study by the Center for Countering Digital Hate in the UK confirmed that Instagram's suggestion algorithms for new users were "actively pushing radicalising, extremist misinformation to users" including QAnon and COVID–19 anti-vaccination conspiracy misinformation, content promoting far-right "accelerationist and militia groups who aim to bring about civil war" along with natural health and "wellness" Instagram influencers connected or in adjacent networks (Center for Countering Digital Hate, 2021). Their study provides additional evidence corroborating our research findings.

Extreme, provocative and often traumatic content targeted to youth in dark and ironic memes include references to child abuse, child pornography, incest, rape, suicide, racism, addiction, gun violence and school shootings. That this content is often juxtaposed in an endless scroll with benign content only further serves to desensitize youth to traumatic matter, and to create feelings of shame, isolation and susceptibility that is a vector for manipulation toward extremism.

Economic and opioid decimation in Appalachia have eroded family stability, and strained social and community infrastructure. In West Virginia, it's estimated that more than 50 percent of children in some counties are not being raised by their parents, and instead are in foster care or living with a grandparent because parents have either died from overdose, are in treatment, or in prison. This is complicated by "kin-caregiving" by aging grandparents who may not fully understand young people's technology use, and may be economically overwhelmed, in poor health or experiencing other life traumas. This awareness of a grim and present reality, combined with continuous exposure to toxic content, exacerbated by the pandemic and polarizing portrayals of persistent civil unrest only further serves to confirm the very premise repeatedly asserted by extremist propaganda and other information warfare that "civilization is in decline."

In prior presentations of this research, we are often asked, Who is behind this? But it's the wrong question to ask. It's not a *who* question—it's a *what* question.

There are no boogeymen in this digital landscape, but a complex ecosystem and a constellation of actors who have learned to "game" or weaponize the system for a host of reasons. These include: Trolls, and nonstate bad actors engaged in mischief and disruptive behaviors online; State Actors (Sophisticated disinformation campaigns by agents of other countries designed to amplify polarization, seed social dysfunction, mistrust and disseminate propaganda, which can also include sophisticated white supremacist content (Martineau, 2018)); Non-organized white supremacists (Individuals who have already been "red-pilled" or co-opted by conspiratorial thinking who actively distribute and engage in extremist or extremist adjacent content but are not formally or knowingly associated with organized groups); Organized extremist groups (Organizations recognized as hate groups or terrorist organizations, which include homegrown splinter cells and international networks); And what we refer to as "Arms Dealers" (Individuals who are not ideologically motivated but who create and distribute extremist and extremist adjacent content and participate in amplification for financial reasons); which can include bots, written by individuals to harvest high ranking content that combines benign and toxic content; And of course algorithms (the complex, proprietary machine learning software that platforms apply to systematically personalize and amplify content with high engagement potential and monetization).

From our vantage point we have been able to view this system holistically and over time. We observe the private Instagram accounts that use what we have come to term "teen lures" such as "don't-tell-your-parents" accounts adjacent to the porn and gore meme generators. We observe the links dropped into Instagram comment threads to follow de-platformed content to new locations, we see the sickening memes that systematically dehumanize people of color adjacent to harmless middle-school memes; we see the "Holy Wars" crusades cartoonized memes that are adjacent to insidious and dangerous adult accounts valorizing extremist violence.

We see the tactic in which extremist and extremist-adjacent content overlaps or is embedded in pornographic and "gore" videos and other dark or "edgy" material targeting adolescent males in a highly stimulating cocktail of complex messaging. This content intentionally preys on adolescent instincts toward what has been described as "dark play"—a natural curiosity exploring sexuality and death outside of the boundaries of adult rules for gameplay, but which has become weaponized to drive users toward extremes coupled with the infinite scroll of Instagram designed

to stimulate the same bursts of brain chemicals that drive gambling addiction at slot machines.

Others have cited the cognitive theory and behavioral neuroscience that go into designing systems that drive individuals to extremes and for great profit. When this is amplified by sophisticated bad actors, it is nothing less than information warfare—with tactics that are too complex for children, parents or individual community members to combat alone. This perspective does not reflect a moral panic or a call to surveil authentic teen culture online. Rather we suggest there is little that is in fact authentic about these highly manipulated spaces. We have come to view the unregulated ecosystem of social media as a public health crisis and a potential moral injury to a generation.

It is important to realize that while adult content moderators are suffering PTSD, trauma, and depression from viewing this content—youth on platforms such as Instagram are consuming this without any mitigating messaging or support interventions to help them cope with what they see.

As one teen told is in an interview of the content he's seen online, "I stopped feeling in the 5th grade."

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RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. MARIA CANTWELL TO ADAM MOSSERI

Children and Adolescent Use and Misuse of Meta Platforms. Information provided by Frances Haugen indicates that data regarding users' interests, friends, and other interactions can and is used by Meta to infer with relatively precise accuracy the real age of users.

Question 1. Is it true, from a technological perspective, that data about a user's interests, friends, and the accounts with which they interact can predict an individual's age?

(a) If yes:

i. With how much precision? Please also describe the methods and metrics by which Meta predicts an individual's age.

ii. Explain each instance in which Meta has used these age-prediction models in connection with its products.

(b) If no:

i. Does Meta make its advertising clients or investors aware that Meta is unable to make predictions about the ages of its users? If so, please provide copies of such disclosures.

Answer. Determining the age of people on social media is a complex challenge across our industry.

We've developed artificial intelligence technology that allows us to estimate people's ages, like if someone is below or above 18. We train the technology using multiple signals. We look at things like people wishing someone a happy birthday, and the age written in those messages—for example, "Happy 21st Bday!" or "Happy Quinceañera." We also look at the age of that person's Facebook friends or Instagram followers. These age estimations are used to ensure people are having an age-appropriate experience, for example, by preventing them from accessing services for people o ver 18 years old, like Facebook Dating, or correctly operating certain safety features, like identifying people under 18 to provide proactive warnings in a conversation with an adult that may be inappropriate.

We're also focused on using existing data to inform our artificial intelligence technology. Where we do feel we need more information, we're developing a menu of options for someone to prove their age. This is a work in progress. Our technology isn't perfect, and we're always working to improve it, but that's why it's important we use it alongside many other signals to understand people's ages.

We're also in discussions with the wider technology industry on how we can work together to share information in privacy-preserving ways to help apps establish whether people are over a specific age. One area that we believe has real promise is working with operating system ("OS") providers, Internet browsers, and other providers so they can share information to help apps establish whether someone is of an appropriate age.

This has the dual benefit of helping developers keep underage people off their apps, while removing the need for people to go through different and potentially cumbersome age verification processes across multiple apps and services. While it's ultimately up to individual apps and websites to enforce their age policies and comply with their legal obligations, collaboration with OS providers, Internet browsers, and others would be a helpful addition to those efforts.

Finally, we're also building technology to find and remove accounts belonging to people under the age of 13. We have tools and processes to identify and remove people who falsely state they are 13 years old or older. For example, anyone can report an underage account to us. Our content reviewers are also trained to flag reported accounts that appear to be used by people who are underage. If these people are unable to prove they meet our minimum age requirements, we delete their accounts. In the last two quarters of 2021, Meta removed more than 4.8 million accounts on Facebook and 1.7 million accounts on Instagram because they were unable to meet our minimum age requirement.

Question 2. Meta uses data about its users' interests, friends, and other accounts with which they interact in order to provide targeted advertising to its users. Can Meta use this data to make its platforms safer for users under the age of 13? Can Meta use this data to identify users under the age of 13 and disable their accounts? If so, does Meta do so?

Answer. We prohibit people under the age of 13 from using Facebook or Instagram. When we learn an underage user has created an account, we remove them from the platform. As discussed above, determining people's age on social media is a complex challenge across our industry. We have various methods of finding and removing accounts used by people who falsely state they are 13 years old or older. For more information on our efforts to keep people under 13 years old off of our platforms, please see the response to your Question 1.

We are working on developing technology to proactively identify individuals under 13 years old to prevent them from signing up for our services and to remove them from the platforms. This process is not straightforward and presents many challenges, including but not limited to considerations pertaining to children's data.

Although this is an industry-wide issue, we are dedicated to investigating existing and novel avenues for validating age, while also working to ensure we are striking the right balance between using personal information to verify age and the principle of data minimization. To that end, we are in discussions with the wider technology industry about ways to share information in privacy-preserving ways that help apps—such as Instagram—establish whether people are over a specific age. As discussed above, one such area that we are exploring is accessing device/operative system-level signals further upstream (*e.g.,* at app download) that would help Instagram understand a user's age, in addition to in-app verification methods.

As explained in our Data Policy, we collect three basic categories of data about people: (1) data about things people do and share (and who they connect with) on our services; (2) data about the devices people use to access our services; and (3) data we receive from partners, including the websites and apps that use our Business Tools. Our Business Tools Terms expressly prohibit our partners from sharing with us data they know or reasonably should know is from or about people under the age of 13. For more information, please visit *https://www.facebook.com/policy.php.*

Question 3. Explain in detail all actions Meta takes to keep users under the age of 13 off its platforms. In your response, include: (a) any actions previously considered and not implemented (and explain why they were not implemented); and (b) any actions that are planned for the future but not currently implemented (and explain why they have not been implemented yet).

Answer. Please see the response to your Questions 1 and 2.

Question 4. Does Meta have information regarding the actual or estimated number of users on each of its platforms who are under the age of 13?

(a) If yes:

i. By platform, what is the actual or estimated number of users who are under the age of 13? Please state whether the number is actual or an estimate, and how Meta determined those numbers.

ii. Does Meta make this information available to the public, including advertisers and investors? If not, why?

iii. Explain why Meta does not keep these users under the age of 13 off its platforms. For each reason, state whether it is a technological barrier or a business decision and fully explain the nature of the technological barrier or the rational for the business decision.

(b) If no:

i. Will Meta commit to obtaining this information about its users and make it publicly available, including to advertisers and investors?

Answer. Per Facebook's Terms of Service and Instagram's Terms of Use, people under 13 are not allowed on our platforms. When we learn that someone under 13 years old is on our platform, we remove them.

As discussed in the response to Question 1, Meta has published data regarding the number of accounts it has removed for failing to meet our minimum age requirement. In the last two quarters of 2021, Meta removed more than 4.8 million accounts on Facebook and 1.7 million accounts on Instagram because they were unable to meet our minimum age requirement.

Children and Adolescent Social Media Health and Safety.

Question 1. Has Meta ever studied, or is Meta aware of any studies, that shed light on how the use of Instagram detrimentally affects the mental or physical health of children or adolescents? If so:

(a) Identify and provide copies of the studies and their results and describe what actions, if any, Meta took in response to such studies and results.

(b) Do any of these studies indicate the number of hours a child or adolescent can use Instagram without risk of detrimental mental or physical health impacts? If so, state how many hours a child or adolescent can safely use Instagram.

Answer. We take the issues of safety and well-being on our platforms very seriously, especially for the youngest people who use our services. We are committed to working with parents and families, as well as experts in child development, online safety, and children's health and media, to ensure we are building better products for families. That means building tools that promote meaningful interactions and helping people manage their time on our platform. It also means giving parents the information, resources, and tools they need to help their children develop healthy and safe online habits. And it means continued research in this area.

We employ and work with researchers from backgrounds that include clinical psychology, child and developmental psychology, pediatrics research, public health, bioethics, education, anthropology, and communication, and we collaborate with top scholars to navigate various complex issues, including those related to well-being for users on Facebook and Instagram. Meta also awards grants to external researchers in order to help us better understand how experiences on Facebook and Instagram relate to the safety and health of our community, including teen communities. And because safety and well-being aren't just Meta issues, but societal issues, we work with experts in the field to look more broadly at the impact of mobile technology and social media on children and how to better support them as they transition through different stages of life. Additionally, we support the bipartisan, bicameral Children and Media Research Advancement ("CAMRA") Act, which would provide funding for the National Institutes of Health to study the impact of technology and media on the cognitive, physical, and socio-emotional development of children and adolescents.

Our insights not only shed light on problems, but they also may inspire new ideas and changes. Most importantly, we do research to make our products better. We evaluate possible solutions and work every day to make our platforms a positive and safer experience for our community. We have a long track record of using research and close collaboration with our Safety Advisory Board, Youth Advisors, and additional experts and organizations to inform changes to our apps and provide resources for the people who use them. For example:

- We created a dedicated reporting flow for eating disorder-related content after learning some people were having difficulty reporting such content using our prior flow.
- We launched Hidden Words, which allows people to automatically filter Direct Message ("DM") requests that contain offensive words, phrases, and emojis into a Hidden Folder that they never have to open if they don't want to. This feature also filters DM requests that are likely to be spammy or low-quality.
- We launched Restrict, which allows people to protect themselves from bullying without the fear of retaliation.
- To prevent bullying, we've created comment warnings when people try to post potentially offensive comments. We've found that, about 50 percent of the time, people edited or deleted their comments based on these warnings.
- We worked with the Jed Foundation to create expert and research-backed educational resources for teens on how to navigate experiences like social comparison on Instagram.
- We updated our policies to prohibit graphic content related to suicide and took steps to protect vulnerable people from being exposed to content related to suicide and self-injury more generally in places like Explore.

These are just some examples of the types of products and controls that we have launched publicly or are continuing to explore based on this research. And we're constantly working to improve. For example, our research shows—and external experts agree—that if people are dwelling on one topic for a while, it could be helpful to nudge them towards other topics at the right moment. That's why we're building a new experience that will nudge people towards other topics if they've been dwelling on one topic for a while.

When it comes to time spent, we want to give people on our platforms—especially teenagers—tools and resources to help them manage their experiences in the ways that they want and need, including the time they spend. We have built time management tools including Daily Limit, which lets people know when they've reached the total amount of time they want to spend on Instagram each day; "You're All Caught Up," which notifies people when they've caught up with new content on their feed; and controls to mute notifications. We also recently launched "Take A Break" to go even further and empower people to make informed decisions about how they're spending their time on Instagram. We show reminders suggesting that people close Instagram if they've been scrolling for a certain amount of time, and we show them expert-backed tips to help them reflect and reset. We try to make young people aware of this feature, so we show them notifications suggesting they turn the reminders on. Finally, we're also launching Instagram's first set of controls for parents and guardians, an opt-in feature that will allow them to see what their teens are up to on Instagram and manage things like the time they spend in our app. These new features will give parents tools to meaningfully shape their teen's experience.

We also offer resources for parents and teens on issues like screen time, digital citizenship, and well-being. For example, in 2020 we launched Get Digital, which provides lessons and resources based on many years of academic research by our expert partners to help young people develop the competencies and skills they need to navigate the Internet more safely. We are also a founding sponsor of the Digital Wellness Lab, run jointly by Harvard University and Boston Children's Hospital, which has resources for parents and teens on issues like screen time in their Family Digital Wellness Guide, found here: *https://digitalwellnesslab.org/wp-content/uploads/Family-Digital-Wellness-Guide-2021.pdf.* Finally, we offer on-demand safety trainings that explore child safety tools and resources available on our apps and provide people with expert-informed, research-based information. These trainings are available at *https://www.facebook.com/safety/childsafety/trainings.*

For more information about research on this issue, please see the answer to your Question 2 below.

Much of the research requested is confidential, in part to respect the privacy of the people who participated in these studies and also to promote full and frank discussion within Meta about important issues like teen mental health. That said, greater transparency and appropriate context are things we think about a lot. We know there is great interest in the way our platforms operate and the steps we take to improve them. We'll continue to look for opportunities to work with more partners to publish studies in this area, and we're working through how we can allow external researchers more access to our data in a way that respects people's privacy. For example, in September 2021, we released two presentations related to these issues.

Question 2. Does Meta believe that any of its platforms are capable of addicting users?

Answer. Facebook and Instagram were built to bring people closer together and build relationships. We design our services to be useful. And we want the time people spend on Facebook and Instagram to be intentional, positive, and inspiring. The effects of social media are still being studied, and we work in collaboration with leading experts to better understand issues around mental health and well-being and to make product decisions that enable meaningful social interactions.

Meta has been working for years to better understand and empower people who use our services to manage problematic use. There are many challenges with conducting research in this space, and we are not aware of a consensus among studies or experts about how much screen time is "too much." Many experts and research studies suggest it's not necessarily about how much time you spend on social media but more about what you're doing and the experiences you're having that's important. For example, although some research shows that passive use of social media—browsing and clicking links, but not interacting with people—can be linked with negative outcomes, research also shows that meaningful use of social media—sharing messages, posts, and comments—can be linked with positive outcomes, like feeling less lonely and more socially supported. This understanding has led to product changes to facilitate active interactions and meaningful connections between people as well as new features that give people more control over their experience on our services.

Additionally, our own research as well as external research has revealed significant variation in the number of people who self-report problematic use, depending on how it's measured. A causal link between social media and addiction has not been established. The research on the effects of social media on people's well-being is mixed. For example, a mixed methods study from Harvard described the "see-

saw" of positive and negative experiences that U.S. teens have on social media. The same person may have an important conversation with their friend on one day and fall out with them the next day. According to research by Pew Internet on teens in the US, 81 percent of teens said that social media makes them feel more connected to their friends, while 26 percent reported social media makes them feel worse about their lives. Our findings were similar. In one internal study, surveyed users were more likely to say that Instagram made problematic use better or had no impact rather than make it worse.

That said, we still want to provide people with tools to help them manage their experiences on our platforms however they see fit. For more information, please see our Newsroom article on this subject: *https://about.fb.com/news/2021/11/wsj-report-ignores-our-approach-to-well-being-research/*. For example, on Instagram and as discussed in the answer to your previous Question, we publish expert-informed resources and have built time management tools including Daily Limit, which lets people know when they've reached the total amount of time they want to spend on Instagram each day; 'You're All Caught Up,' which notifies people when they've caught up with new content on their feed; and controls to mute notifications. We also recently launched "Take A Break" to go even further and empower people to make informed decisions about how they're spending their time on Instagram. We show reminders suggesting that people close Instagram if they've been scrolling for a certain amount of time, and we show them expert-backed tips to help them reflect and reset. We want to make sure young people are aware of this feature, so we show them notifications suggesting they turn the reminders on.

Further, on Facebook, we recently made it easier to sort and browse News Feed, giving people more control over what they see. We also launched Favorites, a new tool where people can control and prioritize posts from the friends and Pages they care about most in their News Feed. Specifically, people can select up to 30 friends and Pages to include in Favorites, and posts from these selections will appear higher in ranked News Feed and can also be viewed as a separate filter. And, on Instagram, we've started to test the ability to allow people to switch to different feed views, allowing people the option to see posts in chronological order. People can also make a close friends list on Stories and share with just the people they've added. We developed some of the tools referenced in this answer based on collaboration and inspiration from leading mental health experts and organizations, academics, internal experts, and feedback from our community. Our hope is that these tools give people more control over the time they spend on our platforms.

Question 3. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there has been a 57 percent increase in teen suicide since 2008, which some experts attribute to the exponential increase social media use among teens. Does Instagram believe there is any relationship between teen suicide and mental health issues (including anxiety, depression, or self-harm), and social media? Please explain your response.

Answer. We care deeply about teens and take these issues incredibly seriously. Mental health, and self-harm and suicide in particular, are complex issues. We rely on the input of experts in these fields to help shape our approach; they tell us that some people find it helpful to share their experiences of mental health and get support from friends, family, and others in the community. Social media can also help tackle stigma associated with mental health. At the same time, experts tell us what's helpful for some may be harmful for others. It is really important that we find the right balance between helping protect people from content that has a higher likelihood of resulting in risk for them and allowing individuals to express themselves and seek support in times of need. To that end, we have specific policies about suicide and self-injury. While we allow people to discuss these topics because we want Facebook and Instagram to be a space where people can share their experiences, raise awareness about these issues, and seek support from one another, we don't allow people to post graphic suicide and self-harm content, content that depicts methods or materials involved in suicide and self-harm (even if it's not graphic), or fictional content that promotes or encourages suicide or self-harm. In the third quarter of 2021, we removed over 96 percent of violating content before it was reported to us. As is discussed in greater detail below, we regularly consult with experts in suicide and self-injury to help inform our policies and enforcement in this area.

For years, we've taken steps to help protect more vulnerable members of our community from being exposed to suicide and self-harm related content that is permissible under our policies, for example, if someone posts about their recovery journey. We remove known suicide-and self-harm-related posts from places where people discover new content, including our Explore page, and we will not recommend accounts we have identified as featuring suicide or self-injury content. We also remove certain hashtags and accounts from appearing in search. When someone starts typing

a known hashtag or account related to suicide and self-harm into search, we restrict these results. We add sensitivity screens to blur content that isn't graphic but could have a negative impact on someone searching. Additionally, we have a resource center that we developed with help from mental health partners.

When our technology detects content that clearly violates our policies, it will automatically remove it without the need for human review. And when a post is reported by a concerned friend or family member or identified by machine learning as including suicide or self-harm content, a member of Facebook's Community Operations team reviews the report to determine whether there are any policy violations and if there may be an imminent risk of self-harm—and, if so, the original poster is shown support options. For example, we encourage people who are going through a difficult time to reach out to a friend, and we offer pre-populated text to make it easier for people to start a conversation. We also suggest contacting a helpline and offer other tips and resources for people to help themselves in that moment. Additionally, in the US, if someone reported the post, that person also receives resources and information about how to help the person in distress. These resources were created in partnership with our clinical and academic partners.

Finally, if our reviewers identify that someone is at immediate risk of harming themselves, we will contact local emergency services in the U.S. to get them help. We use automation so the team can more quickly access the appropriate first responders' contact information. By using technology to prioritize and streamline these reports, we are able to escalate the content to our Community Operations team, which can more quickly decide whether there are policy violations and whether to recommend contacting local emergency responders. Thanks to our technology, our Community Operations team, and as a result of reports from friends and family on Facebook and Instagram, we've helped first responders quickly reach people globally who needed help. For more information, please visit *https://www.facebook.com/safety/wellbeing/suicideprevention.* Please note that our technology does not seek to determine whether an individual posting the content is suffering from a mental health condition.

All of our efforts related to suicide and self-harm are informed by subject-matter experts from around the world. We could not do this work without them, which is why in 2019 we made the decision to set up a regular check in with experts from over 20 countries to discuss some of the complex issues associated with suicide and self-injury content, revisit decisions we have made to ensure they align with the latest research, and ensure we are doing our best to support all those on our platform. We cover a wide range of issues during these discussions, including how should we deal with suicide notes posted on our platform, what are the risks associated with viewing aggregated sad content online, and when should we allow newsworthy depictions of suicide. We also seek their input on product enhancements to foster the well-being of our community. For more information, please visit *https://www.facebook.com/safety/wellbeing/suicideprevention/expertengagement.*

More broadly, we also work with clinical and social psychologists, social scientists, and sociologists, and we collaborate with top scholars to navigate complex issues related to well-being for users on Facebook and Instagram. Meta awards grants to external researchers in order to help us better understand how experiences on Facebook and Instagram relate to the safety and health of our community, including teen communities. And because safety and well-being isn't just a Meta issue, but a societal issue, we work with experts in the field to look at the impact of mobile technology and social media more broadly on youth, and how to better support them as they transition through different stages of life.

We have been clear in our statements that Meta conducts research to understand the impact of our products and to make our products better, like many other large companies and especially other technology companies. That means our insights often shed light on problems, but they also inspire new ideas and changes. We evaluate possible solutions and work every day to make our platform a positive and safer experience for our community. We have a long track record of using our research—as well as external research and close collaboration with our Safety Advisory Board, Youth Advisors, and additional experts and organizations—to inform changes to our apps and provide resources for the people who use them.

We are committed to learning even more about issues related to well-being, and we welcome the opportunity to work with Congress and others in the industry to develop industry-wide standards. For example, Meta and the Aspen Institute have collaborated to advance the collective understanding of loneliness, social connection, technology and how they all intersect. This effort has connected more than 60 cross-sector experts thus far—from academia, health, technology, nonprofits, and government—to share research and identify gaps to inform future research and potential solutions. In early 2021, we also supported the launch of the Digital Wellness Lab

at Boston Children's Hospital, a first-of-its-kind research and innovation incubator bringing together science-based solutions and information about the effects of digital technology on our brains, bodies, and behaviors. Additionally, we support the bipartisan, bicameral CAMRA Act, which would provide funding for the National Institutes of Health to study the impact of technology and media on the cognitive, physical, and socio-emotional development of children and adolescents.

Question 4. Has Meta performed or commissioned any studies or data analyses to identify suicidal ideation or predict suicide risk among its users? If so, identify and describe these studies.

Answer. As discussed in the responses to your previous questions, we conduct research and collaborate with top scholars to navigate various complex issues, including those related to well-being for users on Facebook and Instagram. For additional information regarding our approach to suicide and self-injury, including our efforts to help protect our community, please see the response to your previous Question 3.

Question 5. Is it technologically possible for Instagram to identify adolescent users who are experiencing depression, anxiety, self-harm or suicidal ideation and warn such users and/or their parents to seek psychological or medical help?

Answer. Experts say that one of the best ways to help prevent a suicide is for people in distress to hear from others who care about them. Meta has a unique role to play in helping to connect people in distress with people who can offer support. When people post or search for suicide or self-injury-related content, we will direct them to local organizations that can provide support, and if our reviewers identify that someone is at immediate risk of harming themselves, we will contact local emergency services to get them help. We work with 162 suicide and self-injury prevention helplines around the world. For more information about our detection and enforcement efforts, please see the response to your Question 3. For more information on our suicide prevention efforts, please see *https://www.facebook.com/safety/wellbeing/suicideprevention.*

Question 6. Frances Haugen testified before this Committee in October 2021 regarding studies performed by Facebook in 2019 associating negative body images and eating disorders among adolescent girls' use of Instagram. After Instagram became aware of this hazard in 2019, what efforts were made to warn adolescent users and their parents of the potential association of eating disorders and Instagram usage?

Answer. To clarify, our research shows that Instagram helps many teens who are struggling with some of the hardest issues they experience. For difficult issues including eating issues, loneliness, anxiety, and sadness, teenage girls who said they experienced these challenges were more likely to say that Instagram made these issues better rather than worse. And, importantly, our research did not measure causal relationships between Instagram and real-world issues.

More broadly, we prohibit any content that celebrates, encourages, or promotes self-injury, including eating disorders. We use technology and reports from our community to find and remove this content as quickly as we can, and we're always working to improve. In the third quarter of 2021, we removed about 12 million pieces of suicide and self-injury content (which includes eating disorder content) from Facebook and Instagram; we detected over 96 percent of that content before people reported it to us. A significant portion of that is detected and removed when it is uploaded. In some cases, content requires human review to understand the context in which material was posted.

We're constantly working, including with global experts, to improve in this important area. For example, on Instagram, we created a dedicated option to report eating disorder content, making it easier to report violating content and provide resources to those who may be struggling. While people have always been able to report content related to eating disorders, users now see a separate, dedicated option to do so. In fact, we have a long track record of using research and close collaboration with our Safety Advisory Board, Youth Advisors, and additional experts and organizations to inform changes to our apps and provide resources for the people who use them. For more information on the changes we've made, please see the response to your Question 1.

We do allow people to share their own experiences and journeys around self-image and body acceptance on our platforms because we know, and experts agree, that these stories can prompt important conversations and provide community support. But we also know such content can be triggering for some. To address this, when someone tries to search for or share eating disorder related content on Facebook or Instagram, we blur potentially triggering images and point people to helpful resources. Additionally, if someone tries searching for terms related to eating disorders, we share dedicated resources, including contacts for local eating disorder

hotlines in certain countries. In the US, for example, we surface expert informed resources, including from the National Eating Disorder Association ("NEDA"). These resources will also be surfaced if someone tries sharing this content. Additionally, for those concerned that a person's post suggests they may need help with these issues, our Help Center provides information about eating disorders and guidance to help start a conversation with someone who may be struggling with eating disorders. We also provide a list of recommended Dos and Don'ts (developed with NEDA) for talking to someone about their eating disorder. We'll continue to follow expert advice from academics and mental health organizations, like NEDA, to strike the balance between allowing people to share their mental health experiences and helping protect them from content that may potentially be harmful to them.

Additionally, for the third year in a row, we worked with NEDA to share programming during National Eating Disorders Awareness Week in the US. Throughout the week, community leaders shared Reels to encourage positive body image, push back against weight stigma and harmful stereotypes, and show that all bodies are worthy and deserve to be celebrated.

We are taking steps to protect users on Instagram from being exposed to content that is permissible (but possibly triggering) by making it harder to find. We remove such posts from places where people discover new content, including in our Explore page, and we are not recommending accounts identified as featuring suicide or self-injury content. In addition, when someone starts typing a known hashtag or account related to suicide and self-harm into search, we are also working to restrict results. And our Help Center provides information about eating disorders and how to support someone who may be struggling with these issues.

We don't want anyone on Instagram to feel marginalized, particularly people with eating disorders or body image issues. While we already work in partnership with experts to understand how to support those affected by eating disorders, there's always more we can learn. That's why we're hosting feedback sessions with community leaders and experts globally to learn more about emerging issues in the eating disorders space and new approaches for offering support.

Question 7. What steps has Meta taken to allow access to Instagram's user data to academic researchers for the purposes of studying the mental health effects on its user base, in particular, children and young adults? Please explain these steps in detail.

Answer. We offer researchers a number of privacy-protective methods to collect and analyze data. We welcome research that holds us accountable and doesn't compromise the security of our platform or the privacy of the people who use it. That's why we created tools like the Ad Library and launched initiatives like Data for Good and Facebook Open Research and Transparency ("FORT")—to provide privacy-protected APIs and data sets for the academic community. FORT aims to provide academics and independent researchers with the tools and data they need to study Facebook's impact on the world. These include the FORT Researcher Platform, which provides a secure way for academics to access Facebook data in a privacy-protective environment.

Meta researchers have published and shared hundreds of papers in 2021 alone. We will continue to work to publish research externally and to engage and collaborate with experts, including in data-sharing with researchers on issues related to young people. For example, we have ongoing relationships with groups like the Aspen Institute and the Humanity Center, and we are a founding sponsor of the Digital Wellness Lab run jointly by Harvard University and Boston Children's Hospital. We also collaborated with independent academics around the U.S. 2020 elections; we will take the methodology from the U.S. 2020 program and apply it to well-being research. This will involve collaborative co-design of studies and peer reviewed publication of findings.

We know there is interest in the way our platforms operate and the steps we take to improve them. We don't shy away from that scrutiny, and we are working to find an appropriate path forward when it comes to communicating about our research in a way that allows us to continue to promote full and frank discussion while also respecting the privacy of our users.

Mandatory Arbitration. Instagram's terms of service contain a mandatory arbitration clause that requires users to arbitrate their claims and give up their right to participate in a class action.

These terms apply to users of all ages. There have been reports, including in Washington state, of minor children being contacted through Meta's platform by strangers who lure them into sex trafficking or providing explicit information and images—sometimes via Meta's platform(s) and sometimes using Meta services to make initial contact before moving to other channels.

Question 1. Is it Meta's position that the arbitration and class action provision apply to minors?

Answer. At Meta, we take the issue of safety and well-being on our platforms very seriously, especially for the youngest people who use our services. As per our terms, in the US, we require people to be at least 13 years old to sign up for Facebook and Instagram. Instagram's Terms of Use are applicable to all people when they create an Instagram account or use Instagram.

When we become aware of content that violates our human trafficking policy, we remove it, and, where appropriate, we refer content to relevant authorities, including the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children ("NCMEC") as required by law. We also respond to law enforcement requests related to sex trafficking. We engage with agencies across the world that are dedicated to combatting sex trafficking and help inform prevention efforts on our services. We have developed strong relationships with NCMEC, the International Center for Missing and Exploited Children ("ICMEC"), Internet Watch Foundation, ECPAT International, Polaris, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Child Support Enforcement, and other NGOs to disrupt and prevent sex trafficking online.

We also prohibit content that endangers or seeks to sexually exploit children through inappropriate interactions, such as obtaining or requesting sexual material from children in messages, arranging or planning real world sexual encounters with children, grooming or purposefully exposing children to sexually explicit language or sexual material, or engaging in implicitly sexual conversations in messages with children.

Question 2. Has Meta ever sought to enforce the arbitration and class action provision with respect to a minor? If yes, how many times?

Answer. We are aware of at least one case that appears to fit the criteria stated in your Question. This case does not involve sexual exploitation of a minor.

Question 3. [redacted]

Answer. [redacted]

Question 1. Does an ad's estimated Potential Reach (or "Instagram Reach" or similar metric) impact the price of the ad? Please describe the relationship between Potential Reach and similar metrics and the price of ads.

Answer. Generally, advertisers are charged based on the number of clicks or the number of impressions their ads receive. Meta provides pre-campaign estimates to help advertisers understand (i) the estimated number of people who meet the targeting (or audience selection) and ad placement criteria they select or (ii) how many people they may be able to reach and how many results (*e.g.,* conversions) they can get each day, based on their selected criteria, budget, and performance. Historically, these included Potential Reach, Estimated Daily Results, and—if using interest targeting categories—an estimate of the number of people who are associated with particular interest categories based on their activities on Facebook. Meta does not charge advertisers based on pre-campaign estimates.

In order to make the presentation of these pre-campaign estimates consistent, Meta recently changed Potential Reach and interests into ranges instead of specific numbers, which is how Estimated Daily Results were already presented. Ranges are also in line with how pre-campaign estimates are presented on other platforms across the advertising industry. As part of this update, Meta changed the name of Potential Reach to Estimated Audience Size.

Estimated Audience Size generally estimates a range of how many people meet the targeting and ad placement criteria that advertisers select while creating an ad. Estimated Audience Size is a directional tool to understand how advertisers' targeting choices affect target audience size. Estimates are provided in the Ads Manager interface and update in real time during the ad creation experience as advertisers input and modify their targeting and placement criteria, and the number of people who meet an advertiser's selected targeting and placement criteria depends on many factors, including user activity, and will change over time. Meta discloses

to advertisers that Estimated Audience Size uses a methodology that considers many factors, such as:

- Ad targeting criteria and placement locations;
- How many people were shown ads on Meta apps and services in the past 30 days;
- What content people interact with on Meta apps and services (such as liking a Page);
- Self-reported demographics like age and gender; and
- Where people see ads (for example, in a Facebook News Feed or Instagram Stories).

As Meta discloses to advertisers, Estimated Audience Size may vary over time and should not be interpreted as the number of people who will actually view particular ads. The estimated range provided may not include the number of people who meet the targeting and placement criteria in some instances. Estimated Audience Size is not a proxy for monthly or daily active users or engagement. (Meta's quarterly earnings announcements provide this information.) Estimates are not designed to match population, census estimates, or other sources and may differ depending on factors such as:

- How many Meta apps and services accounts a person has;
- How many temporary visitors are in a particular geographic location at a given time; and
- Meta user-reported demographics.

Meta has a number of systems in place to detect and remove fake accounts. Meta discloses to advertisers that, in some cases, the presence of fake accounts may also have some impact on unique estimates like Estimated Audience Size.

In addition, in cases where a person's Facebook and Instagram accounts are linked in Accounts Center, their Facebook and Instagram accounts will be counted collectively as a single account for ads estimation purposes. If a person's Facebook and Instagram accounts are not connected in Accounts Center, their accounts will be counted as multiple accounts for ads estimation purposes.

The number of people a campaign actually ends up reaching depends on an advertiser's budget and an ad's performance, which are not factors that are considered in Estimated Audience Size. If there is enough data available, Meta provides advertisers Estimated Daily Results, which are pre-campaign predictions about how many people advertisers can reach ("Estimated Daily Reach") and how many results they can get ("Estimated Daily Results") per day if they spend their full budget (for a daily budget) or are scheduled to (for a lifetime budget).

Estimated Daily Reach and Estimated Daily Results depend on factors like bid, budget, targeting and ad placement criteria, and campaign performance. Estimated Daily Results appears in the Ads Manager interface where advertisers create their ads contemporaneously with and immediately below Estimated Audience Size. Meta shows advertisers an Estimated Daily Reach range as well as a range of Estimated Daily Results specific to their chosen campaign objective. Estimated Daily Results updates in real time as the advertiser enters or refines its targeting criteria, placement choices, bid, and budget. The predictions are a way to help advertisers understand what results they might get, before having to spend any money. Additional information on Estimated Daily Results can be found here: *https://www.facebook.com/business/help/1438142206453359?id=561906377587030.*

Meta provides two main buying types for advertisements: (1) auction buying and (2) Reach & Frequency buying. While auction buying is available to all advertisers and used by most advertisers, Reach & Frequency buying only is available to qualified advertisers.

For advertisers who use auction buying, the price of Meta ads is based on an auction where ads compete for ad impressions based on bid and performance. Each time there is an opportunity to show an ad to someone, an auction takes place to determine which ad to show to that person. Using information provided by advertisers in the ads creation process, including the advertiser's budget, the auction determines which of the ads in the auction is most likely to maximize total value for the advertiser and the user—for the price the advertiser bids or less, and never higher. The winner of the auction is the ad with the highest total value, which is determined based on the bid placed by an advertiser for that ad and the ad relevance. Advertisers are in control of how much they spend: they control the overall amount they spend through their budget and their cost per result through their bid strategy. When an advertiser runs an ad, they are only charged for the number of clicks or

the number of impressions the ad received. Meta provides information to advertisers during and after their campaigns about the performance of their ads and recommends that advertisers view their results during their campaigns to help them understand the results they are getting and to make adjustments to their campaign as needed. Additional information on Meta's ad auction system can be found here: *https://www.facebook.com/business/help/430291176997542?id=561906377587030.* Advertisers are not charged based on their Potential Reach or Estimated Daily Results estimates.

Reach and Frequency is an alternative method for buying ads on Meta that allows advertisers to book campaigns in advance with predictable, optimized reach and controlled frequency. Reach and Frequency allows an advertiser to specify the number of times their audience will see their ads, the days they see the ads, the times of day they see the ads, and the order in which they see the ads. Reach and frequency advertisers pay a fixed cost per 1,000 impressions ("CPM") based on the advertiser's chosen audience details and their budget. Once a campaign order is placed, the CPM an advertiser pays for impressions will not change, provided the campaign is not paused.

Question 2. In what ways can an advertiser on Meta's platforms verify the Potential Reach or similar metric of its advertising? What data does Meta make available to provide advertisers assurance that the reported reach is accurate? Does Meta use independent third parties to verify the Potential Reach metrics and methods or similar advertising metrics or methods? If so, please list the third parties and provide a copy of any reports issued.

Answer. Please see the response to your Question 1. As noted in that response, Estimated Audience Size and Estimated Daily Results are pre-campaign estimates, meaning they are estimates provided to advertisers before they publish an ad and the ad begins to run (as distinct from reported metrics once an ad is running). Estimated Audience Size is a directional tool to help advertisers understand how their targeting choices affect target audience size and is not an estimate of how many people will see an ad. Estimated Daily Results are a way to understand what results an advertiser could get before having to spend any money. As Meta discloses to advertisers, confidence in the estimations can be affected by factors such as volatility in the performance of an ad and whether or not an advertiser's entire budget will be spent.

Estimated Audience Size is classified as an estimated metric, meaning that it is derived through statistical sampling or modeling rather than a straight count. Meta explains to advertisers that sampling lets Meta look at a portion of data that represents a larger population included in an entire set of data.

Like Estimated Audience Size, Meta tells advertisers that Estimated Daily Results, including Estimated Daily Reach, are estimated and sampled metrics. For example, to generate Estimated Daily Reach, Meta uses internal data to identify a sampling of people who generated ad impressions and who meet the targeting and placement criteria that an advertiser has entered into Ads Manager and runs a simulation to estimate how many people an advertiser might reach per day.

These pre-campaign estimates are based on data available to Meta. Meta does not use third parties to verify its pre-campaign estimates, which are neither reported nor billed.

Once advertisers launch an ad campaign, Meta provides them with real-time, actual results that the advertisers can use to assess their ads' performance, including on Facebook, Instagram, and Audience Network, and to compare performance to prior campaign results or the advertisers' own data (if any). This data reflects the results an ad is receiving and is available to advertisers on Meta's Ads Manager. Impressions from certain placements are accredited by the Media Rating Council.

Question 3. Identify every instance in which Meta previously learned of inaccuracy in its Potential Reach metric (or "Instagram Reach" or similar metric). In doing so, please describe the nature of the inaccuracy, and the correction, if any, that Meta took to address the inaccuracy.

Answer. Please see the responses to your Questions 1 and 2. Estimated Audience Size is an estimated range of the number of people who meet the targeting and ad placement criteria an advertiser selects. It varies over time, and it is not an estimate of how many people will see an ad. Estimated Daily Results, including Estimated Daily Reach, are also pre-campaign estimates, and an ad's actual results will depend on numerous other factors once an ad begins running. These estimates are not exact calculations or guarantees of an ad's performance.

Meta endeavors to continually maintain, evolve, and improve its product offerings to users (including advertisers), including directional estimate tools like Estimated Audience Size and Estimated Daily Reach. Over the past several years, Meta has

made modifications to Estimated Audience Size (previously Potential Reach), and it has updated its disclosures to advertisers to explain improvements and provide even more transparency. Meta also monitors the estimates for bugs or other issues in Meta's data pipelines that may affect the estimates.

In 2017, Meta received press reports about differences between Estimated Audience Size (then called Potential Reach) and governmental census estimates. While Estimated Audience Size estimates how many people within specified Meta platforms meet the targeting and ad placement criteria that advertisers select while creating an ad, the census counts how many people are included in a given population. Each government conducts its census differently, with varying accuracy depending on the country's methodology. These distinctions give rise to differences between these measurements.

Meta has also identified other factors that may cause the estimates to differ from population, census estimates, or other sources, including: (1) how many Meta apps and services accounts a person has; (2) how many temporary visitors are in a particular geographic location at a given time; and (3) user-reported demographics.

Meta has made a number of updates to its description of Estimated Audience Size (previously Potential Reach) to provide even more information to advertisers:

- Estimated Audience Size (1) is not designed to match population, census estimates, or other sources; (2) updates in real time based on a methodology that considers factors like ad targeting criteria and placement locations, how many people were shown ads on Meta apps and services in the past 30 days, what content people interact with on Meta apps and services (such as liking a Page), self-reported demographics like age and gender, and where people see ads; and (3) may differ depending on factors such as how many Meta apps and services accounts a person has, how many temporary visitors are in a particular geographic location at a given time, and Meta user-reported demographics.
- Meta may count a user's actions separately if they have more than one account and take actions (such as liking photos or adding comments) on the separate accounts.
- In cases where a person has connected their Facebook and Instagram accounts in Accounts Center, their Facebook and Instagram accounts will be counted collectively as a single account for ads estimation purposes. If a person, however, has not connected their Facebook and Instagram accounts in Accounts Center, their accounts will be counted as multiple accounts for ads estimation purposes.
- Meta has a number of systems in place to detect and remove fake accounts, but in some cases, the presence of fake accounts may have some impact on unique metrics, such as potential reach estimates.

In addition, prior to March 2019, Estimated Audience Size was estimated based on data reflecting people who were active on Meta's platforms and were eligible to see an ad over the immediately preceding 30-day period. In March 2019, Meta changed how it calculated Estimated Audience Size to base it on how many people who match the advertiser's selected audience and placement criteria have been shown an ad on a Meta product in the past 30 days. This change did not impact an advertiser's actual target audience, delivery results, or how it is charged for ads; it only impacted the Estimated Audience Size estimates.

Most recently, in order to make the presentation of these pre-campaign estimates consistent, Meta changed Potential Reach into ranges instead of specific numbers, which is how Estimated Daily Results were already presented. As part of this update, Meta changed the name of Potential Reach to Estimated Audience Size.

Question 4. Describe all research Meta has conducted on the accuracy Potential Reach (or "Instagram Reach" or similar metric) and the financial or other harm that inaccuracies in such metrics has (or potentially has) on advertisers.

Answer. Please see the responses to your Questions 1, 2, and 3. Advertisers are not charged based on the Estimated Audience Size. Instead, Estimated Audience Size is meant to help advertisers understand how their targeting and placement choices affect the size of their target audience. Advertisers are not charged based on those pre-campaign estimates of the size of a target audience. Rather, advertisers are charged based on the number of clicks or the number of impressions their ads received.

Question 5. What percentage of Meta's revenue comes from advertising?

Answer. Meta generates substantially all of its revenue from selling advertising placements to third parties. Our total revenue for the past five years and the percentage of which came from third-party ads is disclosed in our public SEC filings, and provided below.

- [redacted]

Question 6. What representations does Meta make to advertisers regarding brand safety?

Answer. Brand safety allows advertisers to control where their ads are delivered on Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Audience Network. We offer several brand safety controls for preventing ads from running alongside certain types of content on Audience Network, Facebook, and Instagram. These controls include:

- *Placement Controls.* When they create an ad, advertisers can choose where they want their ad to appear on Facebook, Instagram, Messenger, and Audience Network. They can also opt out of specific placements if they don't want their ads to run within those environments.
- *Inventory Filter.* Inventory Filter gives advertisers an extra layer of control over sensitive content, allowing them to choose Full Inventory, Standard Inventory, or Limited Inventory on Facebook Instant Articles, Facebook in-stream video, Facebook overlay ads in Reels, Instagram in-stream video, and Audience Network. Inventory Filter allows advertisers to control the type of content their ad appears within. Remember that only apps, Facebook Pages, and Instagram accounts that comply with our policies can be part of these placements in the first place.
- *Topic Exclusions for Facebook In-Stream Videos.* By excluding specific topics, advertisers can choose which published Facebook in-stream videos they want their ads to display on. Advertisers can choose content-level exclusions from four different topics: news, politics, gaming, and religious and spiritual content.
- *Content Type Exclusions.* On the Facebook in-stream video placement, ads can appear in partner live streams or videos claimed by rights holders.
- *Live Streams.* Advertisers can prevent Facebook in-stream video ads from appearing in live videos.
- *Videos Claimed by Rights Holders.* Advertisers can stop Facebook in-stream video ads from appearing in videos that were published by non-partners but are being monetized by the rights holders.
- *Block Lists.* Block Lists prevent ads from running on specific publishers within Audience Network, Facebook in-stream videos, Facebook Instant Articles, Instagram in-stream videos, and Facebook overlay ads in Reels.
- *Publisher Allow Lists.* A publisher allow list is a list of Audience Network, Instagram in-stream, and Facebook in-stream video publishers that advertisers choose for their ads to appear on.
- *Content Allow List.* Content allow lists give advertisers the ability to work with trusted Meta Business Partners to review and customize lists of brand suitable videos for running Facebook in-stream video campaigns.
- *Publisher Lists.* Our publisher list details the URLs where we could place an ad on Audience Network, Facebook in-stream videos, Facebook Instant Articles, Instagram in-stream videos, and Facebook overlay ads in Reels. Advertisers can download the list and review the list, then copy chosen URLs into block lists or publisher allow lists. They can also search, sort and filter publishers in the Brand Safety Controls interface to spot check publishers without downloading the full publisher list.
- *Delivery Reports.* Delivery reports provide advertisers with access to impression level data at the publisher and content levels, giving greater transparency into which individual pieces of content their ads were embedded.

Advertisers can use these controls in combination or on their own. We also enforce Community Standards for the content individuals and publishers can share. More information on Meta's brand safety approach and controls can be found here:

- *https://www.facebook.com/business/help/1559334364175848?id=1769156093197771;*
- *https://www.facebook.com/business/help/1926878614264962?id=1769156093197771;*
- *https://www.facebook.com/business/good-questions/safety;*

- *https://www.facebook.com/business/help/2116031745379221?id=176915609319 7771;* and
- *https://www.facebook.com/business/news/introducing-more-control-for-brands-and-people-in-feed.*

Question 7. In what ways can an advertiser on Meta's platforms verify Meta's brand safety claims? What data does Meta make available to provide advertisers assurance that brand safety promises are kept? Does Meta use independent third parties to verify that its brand safety promises are kept? If so, please list the third parties and provide a copy of any reports issued.

Answer.

- *Community Standards Enforcement Report*—As part of our continued commitment to transparency, we publish our Community Standards Enforcement Report on a quarterly basis detailing our progress in preventing and/or taking action against content that violates our policies. We measure the prevalence of violating content to gauge how we're performing against that goal. Reports can be found at *https://transparency.fb.com/*. In 2020, we committed to undergoing an independent evaluation of our Community Standards Enforcement Report to validate that our metrics are measured and reported correctly. We have selected Ernst & Young to assess the metrics shared in our 2021 fourth quarter report, and we plan to share the results in Spring of 2022.
- *MRC Accreditation*—In July 2020, we began our work and audit with the Media Rating Council ("MRC") to seek accreditation of our Partner and Content Monetization Policies and Brand Safety and Suitability controls. This audit is underway with results expected to be published in the first half of 2022.
- *Oversight Board*—We established an Oversight Board with independent judgment to help Facebook answer some of the most significant and difficult questions around freedom of expression online: what to take down, what to leave up, and why. Additional information can be found here: *https://transparency.fb.com/oversight/*.
- *Trustworthy Accountability Group*—On September 10, 2020, the Trustworthy Accountability Group ("TAG"), a global program in digital advertising, announced Facebook in their inaugural TAG Brand Safety Certified Program. With the completion of our 2020 audit, our certification now continues under the new TAG seal and is expanded from the United Kingdom ("UK")—only to a global certification. On September 23, 2020, Facebook was awarded the Internet Advertising Bureau ("IAB UK") Gold Standard 2.0.
- *Joint Industry Committee for Web Standards ("JICWEBS")*—In September 2019, Facebook successfully completed the JICWEBS Digital Trading Standards Group's brand safety audit. As a result, Facebook, Instagram, and Audience Network were listed as Digital Trading Standards Group ("DTSG") brand safety certified for demonstrating commitment to brand protection and taking steps to reduce the risk of unsafe ad placements.
- *Partnership with industry leading bodies*—We continue to work with industry bodies and other tech platforms, like the Global Alliance for Responsible Media ("GARM"), to share knowledge, build consensus and help make all platforms safer for people and advertisers.
- *Third-Party Brand Safety Partners*—Advertisers can also work with third parties to manage their brand safety controls for their campaigns. The Meta Business Partner Brand Safety program recognizes companies offering proprietary solutions that can help advertisers review content options and control where their ads will appear. Additional information can be found here: *https://www.facebook.com/business/partner-directory/search?solution_type=measurement&capabilities=Brand%20Safety.*
- *Third-Party Fact-Checking Partners*—Because we want people to see accurate information and because misinformation can be harmful to our community, we work hard to fight it. To that end, Meta prohibits ads that include claims debunked by third-party fact checkers or, in certain circumstances, claims debunked by organizations with particular expertise. Advertisers that repeatedly post information deemed to be false may have restrictions placed on their ability to advertise. Meta works with independent, International Fact-Checking Network certified fact-checkers who identify, review, and rate viral misinformation across our platforms. We rely on independent fact-checkers to review and rate the accuracy of stories through original reporting, which may include interviewing primary sources, consulting public data, and conducting analyses of media, including photos and videos.

> Each time a fact-checker rates a piece of content as false on our platforms, we significantly reduce that content's distribution so that fewer people see it, label it accordingly, and notify people who try to share it. Fact-checkers do not remove content, accounts, or Pages from our apps. We remove content when it violates our Community Standards, which are separate from our fact-checking programs.

Please see the response to your Question 6. Additional information on how advertisers can manage and evaluate brand safety settings is available here: *https://www.facebook.com/business/help/297590664193809?id=1769156093197771.*

Question 8. Meta states that it restricts a variety of advertising content on its platforms, including content relating to alcohol, gambling, and other age-inappropriate categories. To do so, it relies on a Facebook ad review system that primarily uses automated tools to ensure that inappropriate content does not reach those under the age of 18. Has Meta ever studied, or is Meta aware of any studies, that have determined the accuracy of these automated tools? If so, identify and provide copies of the studies and their results. In addition, describe what actions, if any, Meta took in response to such studies and results.

Answer. As your Question recognizes, our Advertising Policies restrict certain content based on age. Ads targeted to minors must not promote products, services, or content that are inappropriate, illegal, or unsafe, or that exploit, mislead, or exert undue pressure on the age groups targeted. Ads that promote or reference alcohol, for instance, must only be targeted to people 21 years or older in the US. Similarly, any ads marketing weight loss products and services, cosmetic procedures, gambling, or dating services, among other topics, must be targeted to people 18 years or older at a minimum. If someone whom Meta knows is under a certain age and attempts to view a Page or account with an age restriction, they will be blocked from viewing it.

Additionally, in 2021, we began limiting advertisers' ability to target ads to people under 18 (or older in certain countries), allowing them only to target based on their age, gender, and location. This means that previously available targeting options for users under 18, like those based on interests or on their activity on other apps and websites, are no longer available to advertisers. These changes are global and apply to Instagram, Facebook, and Messenger. When young people become adults, we notify them about targeting options that advertisers can now use to reach them and the tools we provide to them to control their ad experience.

We have several mechanisms for advertisers and Page admins to control the audience eligible to view the content they produce. When an advertiser decides to create an ad, we provide age and location targeting options during the ad creation process. The advertiser must comply with our Advertising Policies and any applicable local laws, and they can do so, for example, by specifying that their ads be shown only to users that meet a minimum age or are located in a specific country. Page admins can also use age restrictions to limit the audience of their Page.

When it comes to detection and enforcement, our advertising review system is designed to review all ads before they go live, including those related to alcohol, weight loss products, gambling, and other restricted topics. This system relies primarily on automated technology to apply our Advertising Policies to the millions of ads that run across our apps. While our review is largely automated, we rely on our teams to build and train these systems, and in some cases, to manually review ads. For additional information, please see: *https://www.facebook.com/business/news/facebook-ad-policy-process-and-review.*

Ad review is typically completed within 24 hours, but it may take longer, and ads can be reviewed again, including after they're live. Based on the results of the review, an ad is either rejected or allowed to run. If an ad is rejected, an advertiser can create a new ad—either with new ad creative or by revising the rejected ad—or request another review if they believe their ad was incorrectly rejected. Unlike the initial ad review, we rely more heavily on teams of human reviewers to process re-review requests from advertisers, but we are continuously assessing ways to increase automation.

We also have reporting, authenticity, and transparency features to encourage advertiser accountability. People can report ads they believe violate our policies by clicking the three dots in the upper right hand corner of the ad. These reports are an important signal for our advertising review systems and may prompt a re-review of the ad. This feedback also helps to improve our policies and enforcement.

Beyond reviewing individual ads, we may also review and investigate advertiser behavior, like the number of previous ad rejections and the severity of the type of violation, including attempts to get around our advertising review process. Adver-

tisers who violate our policies may have actions taken against them, including losing the ability to run ads.

Reviewing ads from millions of advertisers globally against our Advertising Policies can be challenging. Our enforcement isn't perfect, and both machines and people make mistakes. When we launch a new policy, it can take time for the various parts of our enforcement system, both automated technology and trained global teams, to learn how to correctly and consistently enforce the new standard, but as we gather new data and feedback, our machine learning models, our automated enforcement, and our manual review teams improve. We regularly assess and continue to make improvements to our review system to improve our detection of ads that violate our policies and to help protect young people from seeing inappropriate ads. We make changes based on trends in the ads ecosystem and adjust for new tactics that we find from people misusing the platform.

Question 9. Can advertisers on Instagram direct ads to users of a specific gender, age, or sexual orientation?

Answer. We strongly believe that the best advertising experiences are personalized. They enable people to discover products and services from small businesses that may not have the ability to market them on broadcast television or other forms of media. They also enable nonprofits, social causes, and organizations to reach the people most likely to support and benefit from them, such as connecting people to fundraisers for charitable causes they care about.

At the same time, we want to better match people's evolving expectations of how advertisers may reach them on our platform and address feedback from civil rights experts, policymakers, and other stakeholders on the importance of preventing advertisers from abusing the targeting options we make available.

Meta's ads generally allow marketers to select audiences for their ads based on a variety of factors including age, gender, location, interests, and behaviors. These audience selection (or targeting) tools are not available for ads related to housing, employment, and credit. Recently, we also announced specific changes to detailed targeting options.

As of January 19, 2022, we remove detailed targeting options that relate to topics people may perceive as sensitive, such as options referencing causes, organizations, or public figures that relate to health, race or ethnicity, political affiliation, religion, or sexual orientation. Examples include:

- Health causes (*e.g.,* "Lung cancer awareness," "World Diabetes Day," "Chemotherapy")
- Sexual orientation (*e.g.,* "same-sex marriage" and "LGBT culture")
- Religious practices and groups (*e.g.,* "Catholic Church" and "Jewish holidays")
- Political beliefs, social issues, causes, organizations, and figures

Additionally, we give people ways to tell us that they would rather not see ads based on their interests or on their activities on other websites and apps, such as through controls within our ad settings. We also know that young people may not be well equipped to make these decisions on their own, which is why we take a more precautionary approach. In 2021, we began limiting advertisers' ability to target ads to people under 18 (or older in certain countries), allowing them only to target based on their age, gender, and location. This means that previously available targeting options for users under 18, like those based on interests or on their activity on other apps and websites, are no longer available to advertisers. These changes are global and apply to Instagram, Facebook, and Messenger. When young people become adults, we notify them about targeting options that advertisers can now use to reach them and the tools we provide to them to control their ad experience.

Question 10. Does a user's gender play any role, directly or indirectly, in the content or advertising displayed to the user?

Answer. Please see the response to Question 9 about ad targeting options available to advertisers when selecting audiences for their ads. Ads are ranked for delivery using different sets of machine learning models that are constantly learning and changing. There are hundreds of models that use billions of data points, including gender. The machine learning models are only one part of the ads delivery process. Before ranked ads are delivered to a particular user, they compete against each other in an auction and against other content, such as posts from friends and family, for the limited space available in user News Feeds and other placements. As a result, no single input is determinative of the delivery of a particular ad to a particular user, let alone of how an ad is ranked. Accordingly, we do not believe it is accurate to characterize gender as "playing a role" in what is displayed to users, but provide this information in the interest of transparency.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. RICHARD BLUMENTHAL TO ADAM MOSSERI

Requirements for internal audits. Technology companies should not be allowed to put products on the market without knowing they are safe. While Facebook and Instagram were doing research on teen mental health, they hid the research and results from parents and stonewalled Congress. Under the U.K.'s Children's Code, Instagram is now required to conduct impact assessments on risks to children.

Question 1. Does Instagram support extending the U.K.'s Children's Code's self-assessment obligation to the United States? If not, please explain why not.

Answer. Meta recognizes the Age Appropriate Design Code ("AADC") as a valuable source of guidance in the global approach to youth and the potential value of a U.S. equivalent. The privacy, safety, and well-being of young people on our platforms are essential to our services, and the AADC is one of the inputs that informs the expansive work we do every day to protect the safety and privacy of young people using our apps globally. We welcome the "best interests of the child approach" and support a holistic view of the best interests of the child standard in assessing the appropriateness of specific practices and in product development. We believe that adopting principles-based approaches that are consistent across different jurisdictions is necessary to enable effective and scalable technology-driven solutions to protect young people online globally.

In the past several years, we've reflected on the AADC and incorporated the standards as a starting point to develop internal guidance on designing our products and features with youth in mind. Meta has also leveraged the AADC, in addition to other guidance from around the world, to improve internal structures and help product teams ensure the best interest standard is directly embedded in the product development process.

The reality is that keeping young people safe online is not just about one company. We continue to welcome productive collaboration with lawmakers and elected officials. Regulatory frameworks like the AADC underpin the work we're doing to create privacy and safety standards for building youth products at Meta. In fact, we believe there should be an industry body that will determine best practices when it comes to at least three questions: how to verify age, how to design age-appropriate experiences, and how to build parental controls. This body should receive input from civil society, parents, and regulators to create standards that are high and protections that are universal. And we believe that companies like ours should have to adhere to these standards to earn some of our Section 230 protections. In addition, the body could take steps to require each member to publish regular reports on the progress they are making against each standard and to develop a free and accessible information hub for parents and educators. This proposal is a work in progress, but we hope that it will contribute to the ongoing discussion about how appropriate regulation can help us address these critical issues. In the meantime, we will continue to push forward on safety and well-being for young people online.

Question 2. Please list all internal audits or assessments about the efficacy of the measures Instagram currently takes to protect kids. If none, please explain why not, as this is now required under U.K. law.

Answer. We are constantly reassessing our approach to children's privacy to ensure that we're designing age-appropriate products and experiences for youth. On all products, including Instagram, internal assessments help us ensure that our approach is appropriate and effective. As previously noted, the internal guidance we've developed for product teams on designing products and features with youth in mind leverage the AADC, but they are also shaped by and reflect the expertise of internal and external child safety, policy, and privacy specialists.

Meta has also established a significant cross-functional and cross-jurisdictional team who are focused on addressing youth-related regulatory requirements, including the AADC. This team consists of approximately 500 people from a wide variety of teams within the company, including Product; Engineering; Legal; Policy (Safety, Privacy, and Public); Communications; Marketing; and Research. The work from this cross-functional team informs both existing product changes and new product development for youth.

Access for independent researchers. Mr. Mosseri, you testified that "there should be requirements and standards for how companies like ours are transparent about both data and algorithms." Qualified, independent researchers not funded by an industry body should be able to study and assess the impact that Instagram has on children and teens without onerous barriers.

Question 3. How does Instagram currently support requests regarding access to its datasets and information about its algorithms from any independent researcher

(*i.e.*, any academic or civil society researcher who is not an employee of or subcontractor for Instagram) that wishes to study children and teens' mental health and well-being?

Answer. We offer researchers a number of privacy-protective methods to collect and analyze data. We welcome research that holds us accountable and doesn't compromise the security of our platform or the privacy of the people who use it. That's why we created tools like the Ad Library and launched initiatives like Data for Good and Facebook Open Research and Transparency ("FORT")—to provide privacy-protected APIs and data sets for the academic community. FORT aims to provide academics and independent researchers with the tools and data they need to study Facebook's impact on the world. These include the FORT Researcher Platform, which provides a secure way for academics to access Facebook data in a privacy-protective environment.

Meta researchers have published and shared hundreds of papers in 2021 alone. We will continue to work to publish research externally and to engage and collaborate with experts, including in data-sharing with researchers on issues related to young people. For example, we have ongoing relationships with groups like the Aspen Institute and the Humanity Center, and we are a founding sponsor of the Digital Wellness Lab run jointly by Harvard University and Boston Children's Hospital. We also collaborated with independent academics around the U.S. 2020 elections; we will take the methodology from the U.S. 2020 program and apply it to well-being research. This will involve collaborative co-design of studies and peer reviewed publication of findings.

Relatedly, we also work to be transparent when it comes to describing how Instagram works. We've recently published blog posts that explain how we personalize people's experiences and how our search technology works. For more information, please visit *https://about.instagram.com/blog/announcements/shedding-more-light-on-how-instagram-works* and *https://about.instagram.com/blog/announcements/break-down-how-instagram-search-works.*

We know there is interest in the way our platforms operate and the steps we take to improve them. We don't shy away from that scrutiny, and we are working to find an appropriate path forward when it comes to communicating about our research in a way that allows us to continue to promote full and frank discussion while also respecting the privacy of our users.

Question 4. If Instagram restricts the types of research, datasets, studies, or other relevant information or freedom to publish findings for independent researchers, please detail these restrictions and its reasons for doing so.

Answer. Please see the response to your Question 3.

Pro-eating disorder content. I am stunned that Instagram has done so little to address the eating disorder content that is rampant on its platform. In March, according to whistleblower documents, a Facebook engineer raised alarms that Instagram had not kept up with the risks associated with users promoting and glorifying eating disorders. The Tech Transparency Project released a report this month that found, after just four days, that anorexia "coaches" began reaching out to an account that resembled a young teen. Instagram is not detecting and removing clearly dangerous material, despite repeated warnings, internal reports, and harrowing tragedies.

Question 5. What specific steps has Instagram taken to detect and remove content promoting and glorifying eating disorders since its warning in March?

Answer. We don't allow anyone to encourage or promote eating disorders on Instagram, which includes offers of coaching or instructions, and we remove this content whenever we become aware of it. For example, we block hashtags that break our rules, such as #thinspo, #proana, and#anabuddy. In the third quarter of 2021, we removed about 12 million pieces of suicide and self-injury content (which includes eating disorder content) from Facebook and Instagram; we detected over 96 percent of that content before people reported it to us. A significant portion of that is detected and removed when it is uploaded. In some cases, content requires human review to understand the context in which material was posted. We'll continue to follow expert advice from academics and mental health organizations, like the National Eating Disorder Association ("NEDA"), to strike the balance between allowing people to share their mental health experiences and helping protect them from content that may potentially be harmful to them.

We're constantly working, including with global experts, to improve in this important area. For example, on Instagram, we recently created a dedicated option to report eating disorder content, making it easier to report violating content and provide resources to those who may be struggling. While people have always been able to

report content related to eating disorders, users will now see a separate dedicated option to do so.

We do allow people to share their own experiences and journeys around self-image and body acceptance on our platforms because we know, and experts agree, that these stories can prompt important conversations and provide community support. But we also know such content can be triggering for some. To address this, when someone tries to search for or share self-harm related content on Facebook or Instagram, we blur potentially triggering images and point people to helpful resources. Additionally, if someone tries searching for terms related to eating disorders, we share dedicated resources, including contacts for local eating disorder hotlines in certain countries. In the US, for example, we surface expert informed resources, including from NEDA. These resources will also be surfaced if someone tries sharing this content. Additionally, for those concerned that a person's post suggests they may need help with these issues, our Help Center provides information about eating disorders and guidance to help start a conversation with someone who may be struggling with eating disorders. We also provide a list of recommended Dos and Don'ts (developed with NEDA) for talking to someone about their eating disorder.

For the third year in a row, we worked with NEDA to share programming during National Eating Disorders Awareness Week in the US. Throughout the week, community leaders shared Reels to encourage positive body image, push back against weight stigma and harmful stereotypes, and show that all bodies are worthy and deserve to be celebrated.

Additionally, we are taking steps to protect vulnerable users on Instagram from being exposed to content that is permissible (but possibly triggering) by making it harder to find. We remove such posts from places where people discover new content, including in our Explore page, and we are not recommending accounts identified as featuring suicide or self-injury content. In addition, when someone starts typing a known hashtag or account related to suicide and self-harm into search, we are also working to restrict results. And our Help Center provides information about eating disorders and how to support someone who may be struggling with these issues.

We don't want anyone on Instagram to feel marginalized, particularly people with eating disorders or body image issues. While we already work in partnership with experts to understand how to support those affected by eating disorders, there's always more we can learn. That's why we're hosting feedback sessions with community leaders and experts globally to learn more about emerging issues in the eating disorders space and new approaches for offering support.

School disruptions. I have heard from teachers and educators in Connecticut that social media apps—Instagram specifically—disrupt the educational process. One teacher told me that she effectively could not teach in the afternoons because students would spend the rest of the day distracted by what happened online during lunch. The *Wall Street Journal* also recently reported about "gossip" accounts on Instagram and other platforms, accounts students create to spread rumors about each other, cyberbully other students, and instigate fights.

Question 6. What support does Instagram provide to teachers and school administrators? How long has it offered this support?

Answer. As educators nationwide continue to navigate the ongoing challenges of teaching during an unprecedented time, we believe that supporting educators is crucial. That's why we work to help educators find and build community, discover resources, and learn about other tools to support them and their learning communities via our Educator Hub. For more information, please visit *https://www.facebook.com/fb/education/educator-hub.*

Additionally, in 2018, Meta announced a partnership with the National Parent Teacher Association ("National PTA") to launch Digital Families Community events across the country. In 2019, 200 community safety events took place in all 50 states to help families address tech-related challenges, from online safety and bullying prevention to digital and news literacy. The toolkits for these events were developed with experts including the Youth and Media Team at the Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society at Harvard. The events included interactive workshops for families on healthy online habits and a family tech talk around family social media values and social media and phone "off times."

In 2020, we also launched new Resources for Educators that specifically address digital literacy. Get Digital provides lessons and resources based on many years of academic research by our expert partners to help young people develop the competencies and skills they need to navigate the Internet more safely. These resources

are designed to be used by educators and families both in the classroom and at home.

Get Digital allows students to perform a deep dive into core digital citizenship and well-being skills, and learn how to:

- Get connected and leverage digital tools to stay safe while navigating information in the digital world.
- Use technology to explore their identities and engage with others in positive ways to protect their health and well-being while online.
- Interpret cultural and social differences, respond and engage respectfully, and evaluate, create, and share different types of media content.
- Participate in public matters and advocate for issues they care about.
- Learn the skills they need to fully leverage the opportunities the digital world may offer.

Get Digital also offers a facilitator's guide specifically designed for after school programming to support educators' usage of these digital literacy lessons in an after school setting. To support teachers as they look to incorporate digital citizenship and well-being lessons into their curriculum, we designed five different PowerPoint professional development guides. These can be used by teacher leaders to train educators on how to use these materials in the classroom.

We partnered with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ("UNESCO"), the International Society for Technology in Education, National PTA, and EVERFI to distribute our new digital literacy tools to parents and educators around the world. Lessons are drawn from the Youth and Media team at the Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University, which has made them freely available worldwide under a Creative Commons license, and the Greater Good Science Center. And in the US, we've collaborated with The Child Mind Institute and ConnectSafely to publish a new Parents Guide. It includes the latest safety tools and privacy settings and a list of tips and conversation starters to help parents navigate discussions with their teens about their online presence.

We've also partnered with the Jed Foundation to release our 'Pressure to be Perfect' toolkit, a guide for parents and teens on how to manage social comparison on Instagram. It includes information on how to support positive teen expression as well as tips for how young people can share their stories authentically and find supportive communities online.

Finally, we've collaborated with Yale University's Center for Emotional Intelligence and Lady Gaga's Born This Way Foundation to create inspirED, a free program designed to help young people build a more positive school climate. inspirED provides free resources, designed by teens, educators, and social emotional learning experts that empower students to work together to create more positive school climates and foster greater well-being in their schools and communities. By engaging with inspirED, teams across the Nation are empowered to change the way that students and teachers feel in school every day.

For more information regarding our efforts to combat bullying, please see the answer to your Question 7 below.

Question 7. What steps, if any, has Instagram taken to address "gossip" accounts? If accounts were removed in response to reports, how long did it take Instagram to act?

Answer. We take the issues of safety and well-being on our platforms very seriously, especially for the youngest people who use our services. We are committed to working with parents and families, as well as experts in child development, online safety, and children's health and media, to ensure we are building better products for families.

We prohibit bullying, hate speech, or harassment on our platform, and we use a combination of user reports and technology to find and remove this type of content. If an account repeatedly breaks our Community Guidelines, by posting hate speech and bullying content for example, we will remove it from Instagram.

Our Hate Speech policy prohibits attacks against individuals based on a number of protected characteristics, including race, ethnicity, national origin, disability, religious affiliation, caste, sexual orientation, sex, gender identity, and serious disease. Our Bullying and Harassment policies are applied to a broad range of content that attacks individuals, including content that's meant to degrade or shame. We recognize that bullying and harassment can have more of an emotional impact on minors, which is why our policies provide heightened protections for users between the ages of 13 and 18. And in October 2021, we updated our policies on online bullying and harassment to help protect people from mass harassment and intimidation from multiple accounts. We now remove coordinated efforts of mass harassment that tar-

get individuals at a heightened risk of offline harm, for example victims of violent tragedies or government dissidents—even if the content on its own wouldn't violate our policies. We will also remove objectionable content that is considered mass harassment towards any individual on personal surfaces, such as direct messages in inbox or comments on personal profiles or posts.

We're always working on new tools, re-evaluating our policies, and continually investing in detection technology to ensure we are proactively tackling the problem as best we can, as we know how important it is to get this right. We spent approximately [redacted] on safety and security in 2021 alone and have 40,000 people working on these issues, including 15,000 people who review content in more than 70 languages working in more than 20 locations all across the world to support our community. We also use artificial intelligence technology. In the third quarter of 2021, we removed almost 8 million pieces of bullying and harassment content from Instagram; of that content, we removed over 80 percent of it proactively, before people reported it.

In addition, we have created several tools to combat bullying on Instagram:

- In 2018, we launched Restrict, which allows people to protect themselves from bullying, without the fear of retaliation. Once someone Restricts an account, they won't receive any notifications from that account. Comments from a restricted account will only be visible to the user and the person they restricted, and messages from a restricted account will automatically be moved to Message Request. The restricted account will not be able to see when the user has read their direct messages or when the user is active on Instagram. This tool was based on research with thousands of people across different countries and languages to develop a clearer picture of how they experience bullying on Instagram. It found that tools like reporting or blocking weren't always the right options for people. For example, in one of our studies we observed that, of people surveyed in the US, Brazil, UK, Indonesia, and Turkey, 45 percent who had deleted offensive comments from someone they knew personally didn't report them because they were afraid the reported account would get in trouble and/or would find out that they had reported them. And in another study, more than half of people surveyed who reported experiencing bullying knew their bullies personally.
- We've created comment warnings when people try to post potentially offensive comments. Reminding people of the consequences of bullying on Instagram and providing real-time feedback as they are writing the comment is the most effective way to shift behavior. These warnings let people take a moment to step back and reflect on their words and lay out the potential consequences should they proceed. We've found that, about 50 percent of the time, people edited or deleted their comments based on these warnings.
- We launched Hidden Words, which allows people to automatically filter Direct Message ("DM") requests that contain offensive words, phrases, and emojis into a Hidden Folder that they never have to open if they don't want to. This feature also filters DM requests that are likely to be spammy or low-quality.
- Finally, to help protect people when they experience or anticipate a rush of abusive comments and DMs, we introduced Limits, a feature that automatically hides comments and DM requests from people who don't follow them or only recently followed them. We developed this feature because we heard that creators and public figures sometimes experience sudden spikes of comments and DM requests from people they don't know. Limits allows people to hear from their long-standing followers, while limiting contact from people who might only be coming to their account to target them.

Finally, we also believe it is important to provide parents with the information, resources, and tools they need to have conversations with their children about online technologies and to help them develop healthy and safe online habits. To that end, we offer dedicated resources for parents and guardians on the Facebook and Instagram Services, including a Parents Portal, Parent Center (which includes a downloadable PDF guide available in multiple languages), and Parent's Guide with information about the privacy and safety tools available to their teens on the Facebook and Instagram Services, top questions from parents, and advice for talking to their kids about staying safe on Instagram. We also created a Bullying Prevention Hub, developed in partnership with bullying prevention experts, to serve as a resource for educators and families seeking support for issues related to bullying and other conflicts. It offers step-by-step plans, including guidance on how to start important conversations for people being bullied, advice for parents and caregivers who have a child who is being bullied or accused of bullying, and educators who

have had students involved with bullying. We provide tips and tools for bullying prevention in our Safety Center, available here: *https://www.facebook.com/safety/childsafety/bullyingprevention*.

In 2020, we also launched Get Digital, which provides lessons and resources based on many years of academic research by our expert partners to help young people develop the competencies and skills they need to navigate the Internet more safely. It includes a bullying prevention toolkit especially for educators and provides tips for helping teens recognize others' perspectives and feelings. Finally, we work closely with organizations like the Cyberbullying Research Center and the International Bullying Prevention Association.

Question 8. Does Instagram currently take or is Instagram planning to enact any additional steps to prevent the disruption of safe educational environments in schools?

Answer. We remove content, disable accounts, and, when appropriate, work with law enforcement when we believe there is a genuine risk of physical harm or direct threats to public safety, including in schools. We also aim to prevent potential offline harm that may be related to content on Facebook or Instagram and remove language that incites or facilitates serious violence. We're always evolving our policies to make sure they are staying up-to-date with evolving trends. We will continue to improve our technology and make sure our policies keep up with the latest research and with people's changing behavior to make our platform a safe and supportive place for everyone.

For more information on our efforts to support educators, please see the responses to your Questions 6 and 7.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. AMY KLOBUCHAR TO ADAM MOSSERI

Instagram's Marketing Spend. [redacted] That was contested by the head of Instagram at the hearing. Please respond to the following questions related to Instagram's marketing efforts.

- According to company planning documents, Instagram's global marketing budget was slated to increase from [redacted], more than a five-fold increase. According to documents, this planned budget was earmarked mostly to target teens, which Mr. Mosseri denied in his testimony before the Senate Commerce Committee. [redacted]
  - What was Instagram's planned total global marketing budget for each year from 2018 to 2021? And for the United States?
  - What percentage of Instagram's planned global marketing budget was earmarked for attracting, retaining, or reaching potential users under 18? Provide percentages for each year from 2018 to 2021.
  - What percentage of Instagram's planned global marketing budget was earmarked for attracting, retaining, or reaching users under 18 through digital advertisements? Provide percentages for each year from 2018 to 2021.

Answer. As we've previously shared, teens are an important community that helps spot and set some trends. It shouldn't come as a surprise that they, like many other demographics, are a part of our marketing strategy. We require a minimum age of 13 to use Facebook and Instagram in the US.

We started work to build an Instagram experience for tweens (aged 10–12) to address an important problem seen across our industry: kids are getting phones younger and younger, misrepresenting their age, and downloading apps that are meant for those 13 or older. We were working on delivering experiences that are age-appropriate and give parents and guardians visibility and control over what their tweens are doing online, like an Instagram experience for tweens. However, that work is now paused.

Instagram's global marketing budget has increased approximately 4.7 times between Fiscal Years 2018 and 2021. But we do not focus Instagram's entire marketing budget towards teens.

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[1] *https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/16/technology/instagram-teens.html*

- Did any internal company documents use the term "existential threat" when describing the possible loss of teen engagement on Instagram? If so, please provide copies of all such documents from 2018 to the present.

Answer. Please see the response to your Question 1. In addition, from its earliest beginnings, Instagram has been an app widely used and enjoyed by young people, including teens. As such, marketing our products and services to young people, including educating them about features on our platform, has been a long-standing part of our marketing strategy. However, we don't allocate marketing spend by age group (*i.e.,* teens). Over the last two years, Instagram has launched a series of product marketing campaigns, each with different goals and objectives. To optimize these efforts, we target a broad range of age groups, which may include teens, but is mostly spread across 16- to 34-year-olds. While we utilize marketing to inform people about what's new on our platform, the bulk of our advertising dollars are spent on acquiring new users, and our new user acquisition spend is largely aimed at people who are older than 18 years old, not teens.

- Please provide copies of the top 50 most-seen-by-teens advertisements run by Instagram and intended to attract teenagers in the United States to Instagram in each year from 2018 to 2021.
  - For each advertisement in response to this question, please state how many times it was seen by teens and how many unique teens saw it.

Answer. We do not currently track on an age-segmented basis impression-level data for ads intended to attract new people to our platform.

- In addition to advertising its own products and services to teenagers, Meta sells ads to other companies that are aimed at teenagers on Instagram. As previously requested, please provide copies of the 100 most-seen-by-teens advertisements on Instagram in the United States in the last year.
  - For each advertisement in response to this question, please state how many times it was seen by teens and how many unique teens saw it.

Answer. Our policies and procedures limit our ability to produce advertisers' ads and related data. During an approximately 90-day time period between October 2021 and January 2022, Instagram users known to be under 18 most often saw ads from Consumer Packaged Goods, E-Commerce/Retail, and Gaming verticals, which are also among the largest verticals for Meta's advertising business as a whole.

Meta also offers the Facebook Ad Library, an ads transparency surface, which provides a view of ads across our apps and services. It helps make advertising transparent by giving people more information about the ads they see and contains all active ads running across our products. For additional information, please visit *https://www.facebook.com/business/help/2405092116183307?id=288762101909005.*

- Please provide all documents that were sent to Mr. Mosseri or anyone who reports (or reported) directly to him indicating Instagram's planned global marketing spend from 2018 to 2021 as well as those indicating how much of the planned or actual global marketing budget was directed towards attracting, retaining, or otherwise reaching teenagers. Please also provide copies of all such documents Mr. Mosseri wrote or sent on these topics.

Answer. Please see the responses to your Questions 1 and 2.

- Please provide copies of all documents that Mr. Mosseri wrote or sent about increasing the use of Instagram by people under age 18.

Answer. Please see the responses to your Questions 1 and 2.

Instagram's New Safety Features. In early December, Instagram announced new features and plans for new features, including Instagram's first planned tools for parents for monitoring their children's use of Instagram.[2] Please answer the following questions for each of the planned features described in the announcement, including:

- Will the feature be on or off by default when it is rolled out?
- Who will the feature be rolled out to and when will it be rolled out?
  - Please describe whether the feature will only be rolled out to specific groups of users (*e.g.,* teen users in the US), which groups that includes, and why Instagram has decided to limit the feature to such groups.

[2] *https://about.instagram.com/blog/announcements/raising-the-standard-for-protecting-teens-and-supporting-parents-online*

- How does Instagram plan to make users and parents aware of the new feature?

Answer. At Instagram, we've been working for a long time to keep young people safe on our platform; as part of that work, we recently announced some new tools and features to keep young people even safer on Instagram.

- *Parental Controls.* Parents and guardians know what's best for their teens, so we plan to launch our first opt-in tools in March 2022 to help them guide and support their teens on Instagram. Parents and guardians will be able to view how much time their teens spend on Instagram and set time limits. We'll also give teens a new option to notify their parents if they report someone, giving their parents the opportunity to talk about it with them. This is the first version of these tools; we'll continue to add more options over time. We're also developing a new educational hub for parents and guardians that will include additional resources, like product tutorials and tips from experts, to help them discuss social media use with their teens.
- *Take A Break.* We recently launched "Take A Break" in certain countries to empower people to make informed decisions about how they're spending their time. If someone has been scrolling for a certain amount of time, we ask them to take a break from Instagram and suggest that they set reminders to take more breaks in the future. We also show them expert-backed tips to help them reflect and reset. To make sure that teens are aware of this feature, we show them notifications suggesting they turn these reminders on. We're encouraged to see that teens are using Take A Break. Early test results show that once teens set the reminders, more than 90 percent of them keep them on. We launched this feature in the US, UK, Ireland, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia in December 2021, and plan to bring it to everyone by early this year. The Take A Break reminders build on our existing time management tools including Daily Limit, which lets people know when they've reached the total amount of time they want to spend on Instagram each day, and offers the ability to mute notifications from Instagram.
- *Viewing and Managing Instagram Activity.* We've also developed a new experience for people to see and manage their Instagram activity. We know that as teens grow up, they want more control over how they show up both online and offline so, for the first time, they are able to bulk delete content they've posted like photos and videos, as well as their previous likes and comments. While available to everyone, this tool is particularly important for teens to understand more fully what information they've shared on Instagram, what is visible to others, and to have an easier way to manage their digital footprint.
- *Stopping People from Tagging or Mentioning Teens Who Don't Follow Them.* In 2021, we began defaulting teens under 16 years old into private accounts when they signed up for Instagram, and we stopped adults from being able to DM teens who don't follow them. Now, we also plan to switch off the ability for people to tag or mention teens who don't follow them, or to include their content in Reels Remixes or Guides by default when they first join Instagram. We're testing these changes to further minimize the possibility that teens will hear from those they don't know, or don't want to hear from, and plan to make them available to everyone early this year.
- *Further Restricting Recommendations to Teens in Search, Explore, Hashtags, and Suggested Accounts.* In July 2021, we launched the Sensitive Content Control, which allows people to decide how much sensitive content shows up in Explore. The control has three options: Allow, Limit, and Limit Even More. "Limit" is the default state for everyone and based on our Recommendation Guidelines, "Allow" enables people to see more sensitive content, whereas "Limit Even More" means they see less of this content than the default state. The "Allow" option is unavailable to people under the age of 18. We're exploring expanding the "Limit Even More" state beyond Explore for teens. This will make it more difficult for teens to come across potentially harmful or sensitive content or accounts in Search, Explore, Hashtags, Reels, and Suggested Accounts. We're in the early stages of this idea and will have more to share in time.
- *Nudging Teens Towards Different Topics if They've Been Dwelling on One Topic for a While.* Lastly, our research shows—and external experts agree—that if people are dwelling on one topic for a while, it could be helpful to nudge them towards other topics at the right moment. That's why we're building a new experience that will nudge people towards other topics if they've been dwelling on one topic for a while. We'll have more to share on this and changes we're making when it comes to content and accounts we recommend to teens soon.

Kids Purchasing Drugs Online. A recent report about Instagram found that, in an experiment, it only took two clicks to find an account to buy drugs on Instagram, but five clicks to log out of Instagram. When typing in the phrase "buyxanax" in the search bar, Instagram auto-completed the query for buying Xanax before the simulated user even finished typing.[3]

- Please describe any measures, including human-review or automated, Instagram uses to prevent minors from buying drugs on Instagram.
- Please describe the technologies Instagram uses to auto-complete user queries within the app and how these technologies treat searches for content related to drugs, eating disorders, and self-harm.
- Please describe, in detail, how such content could proliferate on Meta's platforms, given Meta's content moderation policies.

Answer. Drug sales are prohibited on Instagram, and we remove content that attempts to buy, sell, or trade illicit drugs.

Instagram's Community Guidelines and Facebook's Community Standards make it very clear that buying, selling, or trading non-medical or pharmaceutical drugs is not allowed. Any time we become aware of content on Facebook or Instagram that is facilitating activity like illicit drug sales, we remove it. We have taken measures to minimize the opportunity for these activities to take place on our platforms.

Views of violating content that contains regulated goods are very infrequent, and we remove much of this content before people see it. In the third quarter of 2021 alone, we removed about 4.5 million pieces of content related to drug sales on Facebook and Instagram, and due to our improving detection technology, the prevalence of such content is about 0.05 percent of content viewed on Facebook. Additionally, the hashtags #mdma, #buyfentanyl, and #buyxanax have all been blocked, and we're reviewing additional hashtags to understand if there are further violations of our policies. We'll continue to improve in this area in our ongoing efforts to keep Instagram safe, particularly for our youngest community members.

We do, however, allow people to talk about their recovery from addiction, and we try to offer help to those who may be struggling by connecting them with free and confidential treatment referrals, as well as information about substance use, prevention, and recovery. When people search for drugs on Facebook and Instagram, we direct them to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration National Helpline to help educate people about the risks and prevent drug misuse. Meta partners with federal, state, and local authorities, as well as nonprofits, on innovative ways they can use social media as a tool to respond to the opioid epidemic. We have seen that Meta products and tools can complement work on prevention, education, de-stigmatization, addiction support and awareness, and we continue to support community groups and NGOs that have used our platform for good. We care deeply about opioid addiction in our communities, and we are committed to doing our part to implement solutions.

For example, since 2013, we've also been a member of the Center for Safe Internet Pharmacies ("CSIP"), a nonprofit organization to address the global problem of consumer access to illegitimate pharmaceuticals from illegal online pharmacies and other sources. As one of its member companies, we have the shared goal of helping address the growing problem of consumer access to illegitimate pharmaceutical products on the Internet. Meta's work with CSIP also includes serving as a founding member of Tech Together, an industry coalition formed in November 2018 and led by the CSIP to enable members to share best practices and find ways to increase our collective impact to address the crisis. We also partner with Song for Charlie, a family-run nonprofit charity dedicated to raising awareness about counterfeit pill sales targeting young people, to help give young people more information about the danger posed by illicit and counterfeit drugs sold online.

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[3] *https://www.techtransparencyproject.org/articles/xanax-ecstasy-and-opioids-instagram-offers-drug-pipeline-kids*