NATIONAL CENTER ON
SEXUAL EXPLOITATION
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CAPITAL DISTRICT 208
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Meta
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Menlo Park, CA 94025

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Tennessee v. Meta
Case No. 23-1364-IV
PX-10048

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NATIONAL CENTER ON SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

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May 1, 2023

Adam Mosseri
Head of Instagram
181 South Park Street, Suite 2
San Francisco, CA 94107

Re: Instagram named to the 2023 Dirty Dozen List for continued widespread facilitation of sexual exploitation and abuse, especially of children

Dear Mr. Mosseri,

[redacted]

Witnessing the exploitation of these young children in real time changed our lives forever, and that day holding tech platforms accountable for prioritizing profit over child protection became one of the National Center on Sexual Exploitation's core objectives.

It has been four long years since we initially met with your Trust and Safety team, yet true changes for child safety have been disastrously too slow in coming. While we wanted to believe your team when they repeatedly shared that protecting children was a high priority for your company, the reality is that Instagram has repeatedly failed to do so – and children are being hurt and literally dying because of your apparent apathy and inaction.

Despite our many pleas and appeals, your team failed to intervene and make it harder for predators to gain access to youth on your platform. [redacted] was one of the young women we met back in 2019. As you know, in 2021, [redacted]

[redacted] Your change to stop unconnected adults from DMing kids on your platform came *too late* for [redacted] and – like with most of your policy changes – was not thorough enough to protect youth. Teens on your platform can easily change settings that are defaulted and find work-arounds.

How is it possible Instagram has not done *everything* possible to prevent another tragedy, another child being hurt on and by your platform? We demand to know how many children need to die for companies like Instagram to prioritize their safety.

Multiple news stories, survivor and whistleblower testimony, lawsuits, and external reports support our assessment that your changes aren't actually doing much to protect children. For years, Instagram has been on the top of nearly every list outlining the most dangerous apps for youth…and recent reports are no different:

⇒ **#1 platform for the highest rates of sextortion** (Instagram 42%, Snapchat 38%, "*by far the most frequently used social media environments where victims were targeted*" – Canadian Centre for Child Protection, August 2022)
⇒ **#1 platform minors reported potentially harmful experiences** (Thorn Report, February 2023)
⇒ **#2 parent-reported platform for sexually explicit requests to children;** Facebook named #1 **(**Parents Together report *Afraid, Uncertain, and Overwhelmed: A Survey of Parents on Online Sexual Exploitation of Children*, which surveyed 1,000 parents, April 2023)
⇒ **#2 social media platform where children were most likely to have seen pornography:** 41% on Twitter, 37% on pornography sites, and 33% on Instagram (The UK Children's Commissioner report, *'A lot of it is actually just abuse' Young people and pornography*, January 2023)
⇒ **#2 platform where minors have had a sexual experience with an adult**, tied with Kik and Tumblr (Thorn Report, February 2023)
⇒ #2 for highest rates of minors reporting any sexual experiences on the platform (Thorn Report, February 2023)
⇒ **Only platform listed in top 5 worst in every single one of Bark's Annual Report categories**: **severe sexual content**, severe suicidal ideation, depression, body image concerns, severe bullying, hate speech, severe violence (Bark 2022 Annual Report that analyzed more than 4.5 billion messages across text, email, YouTube, and 30 + apps and social media platforms)
⇒ **Instagram correlated with higher rates of parent-reported children sharing sexual images of themselves** – a form of child sexual abuse material (Parents Together, April 2023)

Articles about Instagram's inaction and poor policy implementation abound. The following are some from the past year:

⇒ A user with more than 33,000 followers that posts sexualized images of young girls was reported by a researcher; Instagram provided a same-day response saying that "due to high volume," it had not been able to view the report, but that its "technology has found that this account probably doesn't go against our community guidelines" (The Guardian – April 2022)
⇒ Some accounts containing sexualized images of children and teenagers had a total of more than 500,000 followers (Forbes – June 2022)
⇒ In 2022, Irish regulators sued Instagram for releasing children's phone numbers and emails (BBC – September 2022)
⇒ Instagram hosts multitudes of "tribute sites," which are public accounts with sexualized photos of teens and children, often scraped from their parents' private accounts; pedophile networks, exchange tactics, and share links to the dark web are included in the comments (iNews - November 2022)

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⇒ According to a study by pro-prostitution organization Sex Work CEO, 73% of adult content creators use Instagram to find potential sex buyers (showing that prostitution and pornography accounts are active on Instagram – and likely accessible by children as we have found in the past)

⇒ A recent shareholder derivative action filed against Instagram and its parent company, Meta, alleges the company's "directors and senior executives have been well aware for years that sex/human trafficking and child sexual exploitation were rampant on Facebook and Instagram"

In addition to the many harms perpetuated against children, we know they are not the only ones at risk on your platform. Instagram is increasingly being called out as a hub for image-based sexual abuse – the nonconsensual capture, posting, and sharing of sexually explicit images. The Center for Countering Digital Hate found that Instagram failed to act on 90% of reports of abuse sent via DM to high-profile women. Throughout the coming year, NCOSE will be raising awareness about sexual crimes and abuses against women and watching to see if Instagram is actually preventing and stemming or facilitating these harms.

Despite all the proof, despite all the bad press, despite advocates and survivors begging you to do more, Instagram has clearly failed to institute substantive policies and to implement practices to prevent the many, many crimes, harms, and risks on your platform. **For this reason, we are naming Instagram to the annual Dirty Dozen List featuring 12 mainstream contributors to sexual exploitation and abuse.** This year's Dirty Dozen List will be revealed on Tuesday, May 2, 2023.

The public record of Instagram's manifold failings is not in doubt. You know the harms you're inflicting and you know what it would take to stop them. You choose not to. NCOSE has provided your team written and verbal proof, shared our research and experience, pressure-tested policies and products to identify gaps, loopholes, and inconsistencies, elevated caregiver's and children's concerns, offered to connect Instagram with young survivors and law enforcement (an offer Instagram has never accepted), etc. We worked with your team in good faith that true change would come – that faith is gone.

Instead of seeking continued dialogue with Instagram, we will redouble our efforts to hold Instagram accountable with policymakers in the US and abroad, with shareholders, with Apple and Google for Instagram's deceptive app age rating and description, with the press, and with the general public – especially with parents and young people.

We call on Instagram to take immediate and comprehensive action to protect children on your platform. The lives and well-being of children are at stake, and we will not stop until we see meaningful change and evidence of actual improvements.

Respectfully,

Patrick Trueman, Esq.
President

Dawn Hawkins
CEO

Cc:

Mark Zuckerberg, Founder and CEO, Meta

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Vaishnavi J, Head of Youth Policy, Meta

Nick Clegg, President of Global Affairs, Meta

Karina Newton, Head of Public Policy, Instagram

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