United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 1, 2024

Mark Zuckerburg
Chief Executive Officer
Meta Platforms
1 Hacker Way
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Linda Yaccarino
Chief Executive Officer
X
1355 Market Street, Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94103

Mr. Zuckerburg and Ms. Yaccarino,

Once an individual's innocence is lost, it cannot be repaired or regained. The same goes for our sense of safety and privacy once they are violated. As we painfully heard through the shocking testimony in the Senate this week, individuals, particularly our children, too often suffer because the safeguards intended to protect them online are too weak. Today's model of self-policing for online platforms is not enough to avoid putting people's children, teenagers, and loved ones at risk. Failure to address deeply troubling and personal violations of a person's bodily autonomy, or personal reputation can have devastating- even life-threatening- consequences. This is an unfettered epidemic that impacts everyday Americans across the nation and cannot continue.

Last week, Artificial Intelligence (AI) generated images of pop artist Taylor Swift were circulated widely online. These images were nonconsensual, pornographic, and quickly gained virality on the platform X before spreading to Meta-owned Facebook and Instagram, and other platforms across the internet. The Verge reported that one image in particular "attracted more than 45 million views, 24,000 reposts, and hundreds of thousands of likes and bookmarks" on X before the user account that shared the image was suspended.[1] It took 17 hours before this harmful content was ultimately removed. This incident drew national attention, particularly from Taylor Swift fans who flooded the social media site with hashtags to drown out the fake images and push the platform to take immediate action.[2]

But what happened to Taylor Swift is not a one-off: it has drawn national attention to a plague that is harming women and children in our country and will only get worse if left unchecked. As generative AI tools become increasingly powerful and easy to use, more people will be capable of producing this harmful media. Unfortunately, your platforms appear ill-prepared in the face of more attempts by bad actors to spread fake and disturbing content. From celebrities to young people, deepfake pornography causes devastating emotional and societal harms long after these posts are taken down from your platforms. This was a violent, misogynistic image that should never have been made or circulated. In this case, because of Swift's celebrity and status, platforms responded *relatively* quickly to take it down. But what happens to those people who do not have Taylor Swift's reputation and reach? How can we ensure that every American is given the same care and attention when they demand their images are taken down by platforms?

---

[1] The Verge, *"Trolls have Flooded X with Graphic Taylor Swift AI Fakes,"* July 25, 2024.

[2] The Wall Street Journal, *"Taylor Swift's Fans Swarm X to Combat AI Fakes of Singer,"* January 25, 2024.

How many lives can be affected in 17 hours? For a high-profile individual like Taylor Swift, remediation took one day. Imagine if this took *years*.

There is a growing record of public cases where serious safety risks were not addressed appropriately. A 17-year-old actress reported fake pornographic images depicting her to X, but the content remains on the platform more than a month later. In the case of *Doe v. Twitter*, the family of a 16-year-old boy reported that sexual images of him from age 13 had resurfaced online.[3] It was only once the Department of Homeland Security stepped in that the problematic videos of him were removed. Everyone should feel heard when they raise a complaint with a platform. Responses to minors' safety must meet a much higher sense of urgency.

Americans demand, but rightly question your level of commitment to help adults and children going through a moment of crisis online. When you receive a report from a minor or their family about a serious risk to their personal privacy, mental health, or physical safety, we expect you to respond quickly and compassionately. The responses should include what steps you are taking to address their concerns and when you will complete the work. After a thorough investigation, you should inform the person who filed the report about what action you took, and how they can escalate their case if they do not feel the response was sufficient. And this should all happen quickly: lives and reputations are on the line. Sadly, this is not common practice. It is well past time for Congress to compel your platforms to protect people on your platform.

These are common-sense steps you can take to ensure that the worst cases of abuse, harassment, and bullying do not continue to plague our nation. We are disappointed that your prior investments in trust and safety have left these gaps for the public, the media, and Congress to identify for you.

Please provide us detailed responses to the following questions:

1. What amount of time does it take, on average, for your platform to respond to a request to remove a deepfake or non-consensual explicit image portraying them? Is this outreach automated, conducted by a trust & safety professional, or managed by another entity?
2. What near-term steps will your platform take to respond to complaints about harmful deepfakes or non-consensual, explicit images that could damage an individual's reputation?
3. How does your platform provide transparency into the investigation and case resolution process?
4. What options are available to somebody who requests removal of a deepfake or non-consensual explicit image portraying them if they believe their case was not properly resolved?

We hope your attention to this matter will ensure you can live up to your mission to connect people and provide meaningful, safe, and positive experiences online.

---

[3] *Doe v. Twitter, Inc.*, 555 F. Supp. 3d 889 (N.D. Cal. 2021)

Sincerely,

John Hickenlooper
Chair
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection,
Product Safety, and Data Security