

Subcommittee Chairwoman Schakowsky, Ranking Member Bilirakis, and members of the Committee.

Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today.

The Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH) is a non-profit researching how bad actors spread hate and misinformation on social media with impunity using increasingly sophisticated tactics and strategies undermining democracy, rule of law, the mental health of children, and our ability to deal with life-threatening crises, such as COVID and climate change.

Why?

Keeping people agitated, angered, emotional, enthralled and addicted to their ad-and-profit-pumping platforms yields enormous profits for social media companies.

CCDH's research has documented how, instead of taking responsibility, these companies stick to a well-worn playbook when confronted with the harm caused by their platforms.

It goes like this. Initially, *deny* there's a problem. Then admit there's a problem but *deflect* responsibility. Finally, acknowledge responsibility, but *delay* any action.

Deny, deflect, delay.

We ourselves can document such a case - one involving a threat to thousands of American lives.

On March 24, CCDH released a report showing that up to 65 percent of anti-vaccine content circulating on Facebook and Twitter originates with sites and social media accounts operated by just 12 anti-vaxxers - the Disinformation Dozen.

This Committee asked Mark Zuckerberg about the report in a hearing on March 25th. He promised to look into it.

But a month later, our researchers found that the Disinformation Dozen had continued to operate with impunity on his platforms.

Six months later, after the Surgeon General and the President of the United States cited our report, Facebook executives officially responded to our research, claiming it was based on a “faulty narrative.”

However, we now know from documents disclosed by Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen that on March 24, the very same day CCDH released the Disinformation Dozen report, Facebook had produced internal research confirming that a tiny number of accounts were responsible for more than half of anti-vaccine content on the platform.

To this day Mr. Zuckerberg’s company has not accepted its share of the responsibility by taking comprehensive action.

Meanwhile, hospitals throughout the country are packed with unvaccinated COVID-19 patients telling their doctors they would have taken the vaccine but for content spread by members of the Disinformation Dozen, most of whom are *still* allowed to use Facebook to disseminate vaccine lies. Some of those patients will not survive the night.

The members of this Committee have seen the same tactics - deny, deflect, and delay - from social media executives time and time again.

You have correctly determined that social media companies are woefully incapable of self-regulation and that the time to act is now.

The bills being considered today would collectively represent an enormous step forward to protecting children, families, society, and democracy.

There is no group more vulnerable online than children, yet social media companies are developing ever-more sophisticated ways to hook children at an early age to their apps. *The KIDS Act* would finally put real and much-needed protections in place for kids...

Transparency is an essential tool in fighting online hate and disinformation, but Big Tech execs simply shut all of us out.

Why?

Because right now they can.

*The Social Media DATA Act* would give researchers access that’s needed to better detect dangerous trends.

The whistleblowers that have come forward to reveal ugly truths about Big Tech are heroes; their actions have provided new urgency to the reform debate.

There need to be easier avenues to expose wrongdoing, which is why the incentives and protections provided by the *FTC Whistleblower Act* are so critical.

Social media apps are rigged to trick users into giving up their personal data.

The more data Big Tech has on you, the more ways they can exploit you.

The DETOUR Act would finally put a stop to this destructive spiral.

There is also today the consideration of two much-needed bills to address the growing threat of hostile foreign actors who revel in the divisions that social media has inculcated in the societies they purport to serve.

Today, there are no rules, no transparency, and no accountability for Big Tech.

By approving these bills, this Committee will provide hope that an internet that brings out the best in people is possible.

Thank you and I look forward to answering your questions.