

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

2138 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6216

(202) 225-3951  
judiciary.house.gov

February 11, 2022

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

Dear Mr. Zuckerberg:

I write to request information about Facebook’s advertising practices concerning abortion-related information. I am concerned by recent reports that Facebook has regularly circulated anti-abortion advertisements promoting medical misinformation while simultaneously blocking medically accurate information about abortion services.<sup>1</sup> Given the recent onslaught of abortion restrictions that state legislatures have passed or are considering across the nation,<sup>2</sup> it is imperative that women have access to medically accurate information concerning abortion treatment. To that end, it is incumbent upon Facebook to enforce properly its policies concerning advertisements with respect to abortion-related medical information.<sup>3</sup>

Of particular concern are reports of anti-abortion ads appearing on Facebook that promote an unproven treatment to “reverse” abortions. This practice, known as “abortion pill reversal” or “abortion reversal” treatment, is based on the flawed theory that doses of

---

<sup>1</sup> See Center for Countering Digital Hate, *Endangering Women for Profit: How Facebook and Google Sell Ad Space for Dangerous Medical Misinformation about So-Called Abortion “Reversals”*, Sept. 13, 2021, [https://252f2edd-1c8b-49f5-9bb2-cb57bb47e4ba.filesusr.com/ugd/f4d9b9\\_87b1482552a140a880d86f7d2d2e6f2a.pdf](https://252f2edd-1c8b-49f5-9bb2-cb57bb47e4ba.filesusr.com/ugd/f4d9b9_87b1482552a140a880d86f7d2d2e6f2a.pdf); see also Hannah Towey, *Facebook Made Money from Dangerous ‘Abortion Reversal’ Ads that Targeted Teens and Were Seen 18.4 Million Times*, Business Insider (Sept. 15, 2021), <https://www.businessinsider.com/facebook-profits-from-abortion-reversal-ads-seen-184-million-times-2021-9>.

<sup>2</sup> According to the Guttmacher Institute, 108 abortion restrictions were enacted in 2021. This number “far surpasses the previous post-*Roe* record of 89, set in 2011. A total of 1,338 abortion restrictions have been enacted since *Roe v. Wade* was handed down in 1973—44% of these in the past decade alone.” See Elizabeth Nash, *State Policy Trends 2021: The Worst Year for Abortion Rights in Almost Half a Century*, Guttmacher Institute (Dec. 16, 2021), <https://www.guttmacher.org/article/2021/12/state-policy-trends-2021-worst-year-abortion-rights-almost-half-century>.

<sup>3</sup> See Facebook Advertising Policies, *Misleading Claims*, [https://m.facebook.com/policies/ads/prohibited\\_content](https://m.facebook.com/policies/ads/prohibited_content).

progesterone can “undo the abortion pill, allowing women to continue a pregnancy.”<sup>4</sup> According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists as well as other medical experts, this practice is “not based on science” and “do[es] not meet clinical standards.”<sup>5</sup> Dr. Daniel Grossman, an OB-GYN physician and director of the research group Advancing New Standards in Reproductive Health, stated that “[a]ll of the evidence” thus far “indicates that [‘abortion pill reversal’ treatment] is not effective.”<sup>6</sup> Notably, Dr. Mitchell Creinin, professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of California, Davis and lead researcher in a study to test the efficacy of “abortion pill reversal” treatment, uncovered evidence that the procedure “could cause very significant bleeding.”<sup>7</sup> After three women were hospitalized for “severe vaginal bleeding,” his team of researchers stopped the study “immediately,” having determined that “the risk of participation for the women was too great to continue.”<sup>8</sup>

Despite ample publicly available evidence demonstrating that “abortion pill reversal” treatment was unproven and unsafe, Facebook accepted between \$115,400 and \$140,667 for ads that promoted this very treatment. The Center for Countering Digital Hate (“CCDH”)<sup>9</sup> analyzed 92 Facebook ads promoting “abortion pill reversal” between January 2020 and September 2021. These advertisements made unsupported claims that “abortion pill reversal” was effective, “either by statements such as ‘abortion pill reversal is possible’ or by featuring anecdotes from women who claim to have ‘reversed’ abortions.”<sup>10</sup> CCDH discovered (through Facebook’s analytics) that users viewed these ads up to 18.4 million times, including more than 700,000 times by “children between the ages of 13 and 17.”<sup>11</sup> This appears to be in direct violation of Facebook’s policy prohibiting ads targeted to minors that “promote products, services or content that are inappropriate, illegal or unsafe, or that exploit, mislead or exert undue pressure on the

---

<sup>4</sup> See American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologist, *Facts are Important: Medication Abortion “Reversal” Is Not Supported by Science*, <https://www.acog.org/advocacy/facts-are-important/medication-abortion-reversal-is-not-supported-by-science>; see also Azeen Ghorayshi, *A Study About The “Abortion Reversal” Procedure Was Just Withdrawn For Ethical Issues*, BuzzFeed News (July 18, 2018), <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/azeenghorayshi/abortion-pill-reversal-study-withdrawn>.

<sup>5</sup> See American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologist, *Facts are Important: Medication Abortion “Reversal” Is Not Supported by Science*, <https://www.acog.org/advocacy/facts-are-important/medication-abortion-reversal-is-not-supported-by-science>; see also Angie Marie Luna, *Failed Study Proves What We Already Know: “Abortion Pill Reversal” Is an Unsupported Claim*, ReproAction (July 9, 2020), <https://reproaction.org/abortion-pill-reversal-unsupported-claim/>.

<sup>6</sup> See Angie Marie Luna, *Failed Study Proves What We Already Know: “Abortion Pill Reversal” Is an Unsupported Claim*, ReproAction (July 9, 2020), <https://reproaction.org/abortion-pill-reversal-unsupported-claim/>.

<sup>7</sup> See *id.*

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*; see also Kayla Epstein, *Some Lawmakers Push ‘Abortion Reversal’ Treatments. A Study Shows How Dangerous They Are*, Washington Post (Dec. 24, 2019), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2019/12/24/some-lawmakers-push-abortion-reversal-treatments-new-study-shows-how-dangerous-they-are/>.

<sup>9</sup> The Center for Countering Digital Hate, an international non-profit organization with offices in London and Washington DC, aims to “produce practicable, efficient and scalable strategies and tactics to counter hate and misinformation globally.” See Center for Countering Digital Hate, *About CCDH*, <https://www.counterhate.com/about-us>.

<sup>10</sup> See Center for Countering Digital Hate, *Endangering Women for Profit: How Facebook and Google Sell Ad Space for Dangerous Medical Misinformation about So-Called Abortion “Reversals”*, Sept. 13, 2021, [https://252f2edd-1c8b-49f5-9bb2-cb57bb47e4ba.filesusr.com/ugd/f4d9b9\\_87b1482552a140a880d86f7d2d2e6f2a.pdf](https://252f2edd-1c8b-49f5-9bb2-cb57bb47e4ba.filesusr.com/ugd/f4d9b9_87b1482552a140a880d86f7d2d2e6f2a.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

age groups targeted.”<sup>12</sup> Facebook’s advertising polices, when properly enforced, are designed to prevent the promotion of unsafe practices such as “abortion pill reversal” treatment. That Facebook continued to circulate ads for “abortion pill reversal,” indicates that (1) the company knew about the dangers of this procedure, but still proceeded to promote this treatment or (2) the company is not properly regulating its advertising content, thereby putting citizens at risk.

Although Facebook issued a statement that it had removed “many of the ads identified in [CCDH’s] report,” it continued to circulate ads for “abortion pill reversal,” notwithstanding the dangers of this unproven medical procedure as well as CCDH’s finding that the ads targeted minors.<sup>13</sup> According to data collected by CCDH, just one week after the publication of its report, Facebook circulated three ads from the anti-abortion group Live Action. Each of these ads “claimed that it is possible to reverse the abortion pill.”<sup>14</sup> CCDH reported “that these ads had the potential to reach 1 million people each.”<sup>15</sup>

Equally troubling is the fact that Facebook appears to have suppressed medically accurate information about abortion services. ReproAction, a reproductive justice organization, responded to Facebook’s “abortion reversal” ads by posting “graphics with medically accurate information about abortion pills.”<sup>16</sup> Facebook removed these posts, stating that the organization “violated their community guidelines.”<sup>17</sup> According to ReproAction, Facebook did not specify what guidelines it violated, nor was ReproAction “given recourse for appeal.”<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, this does not appear to be an isolated incident. SASS (Self-Managed Abortion; Safe & Supported), another reproductive health organization, faced similar treatment when Facebook removed one of their advertisements that included a graphic saying, “you can have an abortion at home.”<sup>19</sup> Although Facebook reinstated the advertisement after SASS appealed,<sup>20</sup> it is deeply concerning that Facebook appears to be censoring medically accurate information about abortion services while promoting anti-abortion misinformation. This is further demonstrated by Facebook’s decision to suppress medical information after Texas enacted S.B. 8—which bans abortions after approximately six weeks of pregnancy with no exception for rape or incest.<sup>21</sup> As noted by ReproAction, after S.B. 8 was passed, “Facebook both suppressed the hashtags for

---

<sup>12</sup> See Facebook Advertising Policies, *Illegal Products or Services*,

[https://m.facebook.com/policies/ads/prohibited\\_content](https://m.facebook.com/policies/ads/prohibited_content).

<sup>13</sup> Whitney Kimball, *Facebook Profits From Showing Teens Unethical 'Abortion Reversal' Ads*, Gizmodo (Sept. 14, 2021), <https://gizmodo.com/facebook-profits-from-showing-teens-unethical-abortion-1847675230>; Emily Shugerman, *Facebook Vowed to Probe Shady Anti-Abortion Ads. It Just Ran More*, Daily Beast (Sept. 22, 2021), <https://www.thedailybeast.com/facebook-runs-more-abortion-reversal-ads-after-promising-to-investigate>.

<sup>14</sup> Emily Shugerman, *Facebook Vowed to Probe Shady Anti-Abortion Ads. It Just Ran More*, Daily Beast (Sept. 22, 2021), <https://www.thedailybeast.com/facebook-runs-more-abortion-reversal-ads-after-promising-to-investigate>.

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

<sup>16</sup> Carrie N. Baker, Carly Thomsen, *Facebook Profits from Anti-Abortion Misinformation While Suppressing Medically Accurate Abortion Facts*, Ms. Magazine (Nov. 30, 2021), <https://msmagazine.com/2021/11/30/facebook-anti-abortion-misinformation-abortion-pill-reversal/>.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> *Id.*

<sup>19</sup> *Id.*

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

<sup>21</sup> See Tex. S. B. 8, 87th Leg., Reg. Sess. (Tex. 2021)

mifepristone and misoprostol—two medications that can safely end a pregnancy at home. Meanwhile, [Facebook] allowed anti-abortion advocates’ access to the ‘abortion pill reversal’ hashtag.”<sup>22</sup>

Disturbingly, Facebook’s decision to suppress accurate information while promoting misinformation is not anomalous. As various reports have documented,<sup>23</sup> this behavior is indicative of a pattern that spans beyond the context of abortion. Researchers at the Cybersecurity for Democracy project at New York University found that “far-right purveyors of misinformation have by far the highest levels of engagement per follower compared to any other category of news source.”<sup>24</sup> When looking at the far-right, the researchers determined that regularly circulating misinformation “confers a significant advantage” in “outperforming non-misinformation sources.”<sup>25</sup> Notably, the researchers found that “[c]enter and left partisan categories incur a misinformation penalty, while right-leaning sources do not.”<sup>26</sup>

In light of the foregoing, please provide the Committee with the following by no later than **February 25, 2022**.

- A response explaining why Facebook continued to promote advertisements about “abortion reversal” treatment despite the known dangers of this unscientific and unproven medical procedure;
- All documents and communications relating to Facebook’s promotion of anti-abortion advertisements, including those advertisements relating to “abortion reversal;”

---

<sup>22</sup> See Carrie N. Baker, Carly Thomsen, *Facebook Profits from Anti-Abortion Misinformation While Suppressing Medically Accurate Abortion Facts*, Ms. Magazine (Nov. 30, 2021), <https://msmagazine.com/2021/11/30/facebook-anti-abortion-misinformation-abortion-pill-reversal/>; see also ReproAction, *Tell Facebook and Instagram to Stop Hiding Fact-Based Abortion Information*, <https://reproaction.org/action/tell-facebook-and-instagram-to-stop-hiding-fact-based-abortion-information/>.

<sup>23</sup> See Brandy Zadrozny, ‘Carol’s Journey’: What Facebook Knew About How It Radicalized Users, NBC News (Oct. 22, 2021), <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/facebook-knew-radicalized-users-rcna3581>; Gilad Edelman, *Fake News Gets More Engagement on Facebook—But Only If It’s Right-Wing*, Wired (March 3, 2021), <https://www.wired.com/story/right-wing-fake-news-more-engagement-facebook/>; Laura Edelson et al., *Far-right News Sources on Facebook More Engaging*, NYU Cybersecurity for Democracy (March 3, 2021), <https://medium.com/cybersecurity-for-democracy/far-right-news-sources-on-facebook-more-engaging-e04a01efae90>; Caroline Newman, *Study: How Facebook Pushes Users, Especially Conservative Users, Into Echo Chambers*, UVAToday (Nov. 18, 2020), <https://news.virginia.edu/content/study-how-facebook-pushes-users-especially-conservative-users-echo-chambers>; Alex Thompson, *Why The Right Wing Has A Massive Advantage on Facebook*, Politico (Sept. 26, 2020), <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/09/26/facebook-conservatives-2020-421146>.

<sup>24</sup> Gilad Edelman, *Fake News Gets More Engagement on Facebook—But Only If It’s Right-Wing*, Wired (March 3, 2021), <https://www.wired.com/story/right-wing-fake-news-more-engagement-facebook/>.

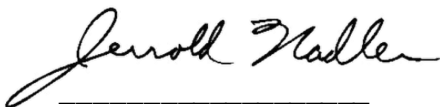
<sup>25</sup> Laura Edelson et al., *Far-right News Sources on Facebook More Engaging*, NYU Cybersecurity for Democracy (March 3, 2021), <https://medium.com/cybersecurity-for-democracy/far-right-news-sources-on-facebook-more-engaging-e04a01efae90>

<sup>26</sup> *Id.*

- A response explaining why Facebook allowed “abortion reversal” ads to be targeted to children despite the company’s policy banning advertisements targeted to minors “that promote products, services, or content that are inappropriate, illegal, or unsafe, or that exploit, mislead, or exert undue pressure on the age groups targeted;”<sup>27</sup>
- A response explaining the steps Facebook has taken to prevent the spread of misinformation about abortion, including “abortion reversal” treatment;
- All documents relating to Facebook’s process for removing advertisements as well as Facebook’s appeal process;
- A response to the CCDH’s report entitled “*Endangering Women for Profit: How Facebook and Google Sell Ad Space for Dangerous Medical Misinformation about So-Call Abortion “Reversals,”*” including an explanation as to why Facebook appears to promote anti-abortion misinformation, while simultaneously censoring medically accurate information about abortion services; and
- A response explaining the steps Facebook commits to taking to address this seeming inconsistency of promoting anti-abortion misinformation, while suppressing medically accurate information about abortion services.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



---

Jerrold Nadler  
Chair  
Committee on the Judiciary

---

<sup>27</sup> See Facebook Advertising Policies, *Illegal Products or Services*, [https://m.facebook.com/policies/ads/prohibited\\_content](https://m.facebook.com/policies/ads/prohibited_content).