

**October 14, 2021**

**ATTORNEY GENERAL RAOUL SEEKS ANSWERS FROM FACEBOOK ON PROGRAM THAT PROMOTES COVID-19 DISINFORMATION**

**Chicago** — Attorney General Kwame Raoul today joined a coalition of 14 attorneys general urging Facebook to disclose whether individuals who spread falsehoods and mislead Americans about the safety of the coronavirus vaccines – the so-called “Disinformation Dozen” – were granted “XCheck” protections to evade enforcement and spread COVID-19 falsehoods and anti-vaccine disinformation in violation of Facebook rules.

Internal Facebook documents shared by whistleblower Frances Haugen revealed that Facebook maintains a whitelist of users under the project name “XCheck” that allows millions of celebrities, politicians and journalists to share content in violation of Facebook rules. Documents showed those posts contained harassment, incitement of violence and disinformation regarding vaccinations and COVID-19.

“The disinformation shared on Facebook is incredibly dangerous. It is disturbing that Facebook allows elite users to violate the platform’s rules and share false information related to the COVID-19 pandemic,” Raoul said. “I urge Facebook to disclose which users were allowed to spread disinformation and to take steps to eliminate harmful disinformation on its platform.”

[In the letter](#) to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, Raoul and the coalition urge Facebook to disclose whether any members of the Disinformation Dozen have received XCheck whitelist protection. Raoul and the coalition also ask Facebook to disclose the extent to which whitelisted content has been deemed to be anti-vaccine, and how many user complaints regarding such anti-vaccine posts have resulted in removal of the content.

Despite efforts Facebook has taken to address some elements of vaccine disinformation, evidence is clear that Facebook’s algorithm has promoted anti-vaccine content and that those who have chosen not to be vaccinated have been influenced by false or misleading information shared on Facebook.

Joining Raoul in sending the letter are the attorneys general of Connecticut, California, Delaware, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and Virginia.



OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
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WILLIAM TONG  
ATTORNEY GENERAL

October 13, 2021

**Via Electronic Mail**

Mark Zuckerberg  
Chairman & Chief Executive Officer  
Facebook, Inc.  
1 Hacker Way  
Menlo Park, California 94025

Re: *Facebook "XCheck" and Vaccine Disinformation*

Dear Mr. Zuckerberg:

We, the undersigned attorneys general, are extremely concerned with the recent [reports](#) that your company maintained a "whitelist" of users under the project name "XCheck." Our concerns center around whether this list contained members of the so-called "[Disinformation Dozen](#)," those individuals who spread falsehoods and mislead Americans about the safety of the coronavirus vaccines, and in doing so, are threatening the health of our communities. As noted in a [previous letter](#) to you and Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey, these 12 individuals are responsible for almost two-thirds of false or misleading content regarding the safety of COVID-19 vaccine content across social media platforms, including Facebook and Instagram.

In a recent [study](#) released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), unvaccinated individuals are 10 times more likely to be hospitalized and 11 times more likely to die of COVID-19 than those who are fully vaccinated. Despite this data, a persistent number of Americans say they will "definitely not" take the vaccine, according to a [survey](#) by the Kaiser Family Foundation. The evidence is overwhelming that these individuals' opinions are formed via false or misleading information they receive via your platforms, particularly Facebook.

While we appreciate the efforts your platforms have undertaken to address some elements of vaccine disinformation on your platforms, including connecting users with factual COVID-19 information, we believe Facebook itself is undermining these efforts by allowing such false or misleading statements to persist and spread. Due to that, we request you answer the following questions on the XCheck program and false or misleading vaccine content on your platform and provide a response by October 27, 2021:

- What is the extent of XCheck or "Whitelist" protections for the Disinformation Dozen?

165 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

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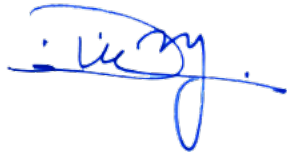
- How is vaccine content being scored for removal?
  - Have political or public relations considerations been factored into the scoring system?
  - Have engagement or revenue reasons been factored or expressed, either in internal channels or meetings?
- How much of this un-checked “whitelist” content is (or has been) vaccine content?
- The Wall Street Journal reported that hundreds of thousands of anti-vaccine comments have been viewed every day. What is Facebook’s protocol to address false and misleading vaccine content that appears in the “comments” section of posts?
- When did Facebook become aware its algorithm was promoting false and misleading vaccine content on Instagram? What action did you take to stop this?
- When did Facebook become aware its algorithm was promoting pages with false and misleading content regarding vaccine safety? What action did you take to stop this?
- How many user reports of false or misleading vaccine information result in the removal of posts or accounts?
- Why has Facebook failed to remove any of Joseph Mercola's accounts on Facebook or Instagram?
- Why has Facebook failed to remove Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s page after removing his Instagram account?
- YouTube recently committed to removing all anti-vaccine content and to banning several prominent anti-vaccine activists, including Joseph Mercola and Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Will Facebook make a similar commitment?

Additionally, please produce all policies and user terms and conditions that concern the protection of users from false or misleading content.

Mark Zuckerberg  
Chairman & CEO, Facebook  
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We thank you for your attention to this issue and continue to urge you to address disinformation generally and anti-vaccine disinformation specifically on your platforms.

Sincerely,



WILLIAM TONG  
Attorney General of Connecticut



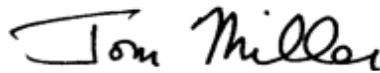
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TOM MILLER  
Attorney General of Iowa



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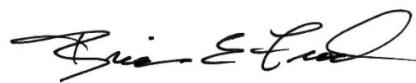
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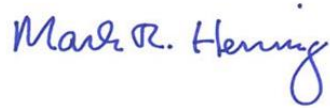


PETER NERONHA  
Attorney General of Rhode Island

Mark Zuckerberg  
Chairman & CEO, Facebook  
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Handwritten signature of T.J. Donovan in black ink.

T.J. DONOVAN  
Attorney General of Vermont

Handwritten signature of Mark R. Herring in blue ink.

MARK HERRING  
Attorney General of Virginia