

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 28, 2023

Elon Musk
Chief Executive Officer
Twitter, Inc.
1355 Market Street, Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94103

Dear Mr. Musk,

We write today to raise additional concerns about the rise of hate speech on Twitter. New studies have demonstrated, once again, that hate speech has dramatically increased on the platform. As a result of these studies, we have new data showing that Twitter is not adequately or consistently acting on the hate speech on the platform. We are reaching out to you again to understand how you are planning to combat this increase in harmful and hateful content.

We originally wrote to you in December of 2022, after multiple reports came out demonstrating that since late October, when you initiated numerous layoffs and changes at the company, hate speech has dramatically increased on Twitter. As we mentioned in that letter, there has been an extreme spike in the number of tweets that include slurs, the level of engagement with these tweets, and the popularity of spreading this harmful rhetoric.

Of particular concern to us were the rise in antisemitic tweets and anti-LGTBQ rhetoric. When we wrote to you in December, there was an “61.3% increase in the volume of tweets (excluding retweets) referencing ‘Jews’ or ‘Judaism’ with an antisemitic sentiment,”¹ as well as findings that anti-LGBTQ+ extremists are picking up followers at quadruple the pace since the change in leadership.² We found, and still find, this to be unacceptable and wrote to you with concern of the content moderation capabilities of Twitter under your leadership.

Unfortunately, our letter was only met with open hostility and a false public attack that did not provide the requested data. Your various tweets to our offices included statistics without evidence, nonsensical graphs, and personal attacks. Your tweets at us stating a decrease in hate speech was followed by massive amounts of antisemitic and anti-LGBTQ comments and threats against us on both of our Twitter accounts.

We are writing three months later as new research has been published showing your claims about a decrease in hate speech to be false. In a new study by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), analysis shows that “the weekly average number of antisemitic tweets increas[ed] by 106% when comparing the period before and after Musk’s acquisition.”³

Additionally, the Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH) released a new study today, which shows there was a 119% increase in anti-LGBTQ rhetoric and slurs on the platform under your leadership.⁴ This follows a February study from CCDH which demonstrated the harms that you have brought to the

¹ <https://twitter.com/ADL/status/1593714819932332034>

² <https://counterhate.com/blog/the-musk-bump-quantifying-the-rise-in-hate-speech-under-elon-musk/>

³ <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Antisemitism-on-Twitter-Before-and-After-Elon-Musks-Acquisition.pdf>

⁴ <https://counterhate.com/research/toxic-twitter-anti-lgbtq>

platform by reinstating tens of thousands of accounts that were espousing antisemitic, anti-LGBTQ, bigoted, misogynistic, and racist ideologies. Most notably they found that just ten of these hateful accounts have accumulated over 2.5 billion impressions on Twitter since December.⁵ The theme of bad actors flooding your platform continued when you took over, as the ISD study also found “a ‘surge’ in the number of new accounts created immediately after Musk took over that posted at least some antisemitic content.”⁶

With both old hateful accounts returning and new accounts with malicious intent being created, we are not surprised that Twitter has not been able to significantly or meaningfully lower hate speech numbers. Data from the ISD study showed “only a very small decrease in the average levels of engagement or interaction with antisemitic Tweets before and after the takeover,” an amount that researchers said does not amount to appreciable change.⁷

We understand that there is a monetary gain for Twitter by allowing bad actors on your platform. From reinstating just these ten accounts back, CCDH estimates Twitter will generate up to \$19 million a year in advertising revenue.⁸ CCDH further found that just five accounts known for driving anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric stand to generate up to \$6.4 million per year in advertising revenue.⁹ We do not believe that Twitter revenue should come at the cost of the safety of users. You appeared to agree, when you stated that “Negative/hate tweets will be max deboosted & demonetized, so no ads or other revenue to Twitter.”¹⁰ Clearly, Twitter’s actions are not following your public commitments.

As we previously wrote, with rapidly changing and unclear policies on content moderation on Twitter, amid documented negative trends and public evidence, we are concerned about the individual and community harm arising from Twitter, including how that could spill from online into real life. Even after the communication with your staff, we are still seeking further information about your plans for content moderation and the capability of your workforce to implement and enforce your policies.

We are seeking answers to the following questions:

- What steps is your company taking in response to the recent rise in hate speech on your platform and how do you plan to make these decisions available to the public? Additionally, what is your timeline for rolling out any of these changes?
- Your company has stated that human safety is a priority, but anti-LGBTQ rhetoric has increased since the Colorado Springs Shooting. We have also seen a distinct rise in antisemitism on the platform. What is Twitter’s plan to increase safety for its users, and more specifically the LGBTQ+ community and the Jewish community?
- What is the current process for enforcing content moderation on your platform? How do you plan to make these processes transparent and available to the public and researchers?
- With the recent drastic reduction in the number of Twitter employees, including specialist content moderators, engineers, and safety team members, what is your company’s current capability and capacity to handle the risks arising from the extreme rise in hate speech, hate actors and the

⁵ https://counterhate.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Toxic-Twitter_FINAL.pdf

⁶ <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Antisemitism-on-Twitter-Before-and-After-Elon-Musks-Acquisition.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2023/03/20/antisemitic-tweets-soared-twitter-after-musk-took-over-study-finds/>

⁸ https://counterhate.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Toxic-Twitter_FINAL.pdf

⁹ <https://counterhate.com/research/toxic-twitter-anti-lgbtq>

¹⁰ https://twitter.com/elonmusk/status/1593673339826212864?utm_campaign=wp_the_technology_202&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&wpsrc=nl_technology202&lang=en

growth of hate communities? What is the current risk-assessment process and response timeline for viral hate speech and disinformation?

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Adam Schiff
Member of Congress



Mark Takano
Member of Congress