

BOBBY L. RUSH

1ST DISTRICT, ILLINOIS

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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March 13, 2020

Mr. Mark Zuckerberg
Founder and CEO
Facebook
1 Hacker Way
Menlo Park, CA 94025-1456

Mr. Jack Dorsey
CEO
Twitter, Inc.
1355 Market Street Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94103-1337

Dear Messrs. Zuckerberg and Dorsey:

As you are aware, our nation and the world are currently in the midst of a global pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, often referred to as the coronavirus/COVID-19.¹ Therefore, it is critically important that, now more than ever, people have access to reliable information that serves to increase public awareness regarding the virus, thereby improving public health. That is why I have been profoundly disappointed to see countless examples of misinformation and downright lies propagated on your platforms. While some of these postings may seem innocuous, such blatant misinformation has the gross potential to not only degrade the public discourse, but to also result in bodily harm. Especially when the inaccurate information concerns something as serious as deadly pathogens.

Furthermore, much of this misinformation has also conveyed racist themes and language² — literally adding insult to injury. Such characterizations have led to race-based violence around the world³ and have attempted to lull certain racial groups into a dangerous, false sense of security regarding their susceptibility to this disease.⁴ This, as I hope you would agree, is unequivocally

¹ Chappell, Bill. "Coronavirus: COVID-19 Is Now Officially A Pandemic, WHO Says." NPR. NPR, March 11, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/03/11/814474930/coronavirus-covid-19-is-now-officially-a-pandemic-who-says>.

² Romm, Tony. "Millions of Tweets Peddled Conspiracy Theories about Coronavirus in Other Countries, an Unpublished U.S. Report Says." The Washington Post. WP Company, February 29, 2020. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2020/02/29/twitter-coronavirus-misinformation-state-department/>.

³ Campa, Andrew J, Anh Do, and Colleen Shalby. "Officials Decry Anti-Asian Bigotry, Misinformation amid Coronavirus Outbreak." Los Angeles Times. Los Angeles Times, March 3, 2020. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-03-03/feinstein-decries-unconscionable-racism-amid-coronavirus-outbreak>.

⁴ Armstrong, Jenice. "Don't Believe the Myth That Black People Can't Get Coronavirus: Jenice Armstrong." <https://www.inquirer.com/staff>, March 11, 2020. <https://www.inquirer.com/health/coronavirus/coronavirus-blacks-african-americans-myths-philly-jenice-armstrong-20200310.html>.

unacceptable. Therefore, I request your respective companies provide additional information to the following questions:

1. What is your company doing to prevent misinformation from spreading on your platform(s)?
2. What is your company doing to ensure that race-based targeting and harassment are not allowed to propagate on your platform(s)?
3. What is your company doing to ensure that your platforms are serving as a resource for the public by disseminating necessary and accurate information?

I thank you for your consideration of my request and look forward to your timely response. If you have any further questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bobby L. Rush". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bobby" being more prominent.

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress