

**Chairman Peters Opening Statement, Panel Two, As Prepared for Delivery
Full Committee Hearing: Social Media's Impact on Homeland Security
September 14, 2022**

This morning, the Committee heard testimony from experts and former executives at Facebook and Twitter that provided important transparency and context for how many of the biggest social media companies operate.

Independent and accurate information about how companies balance competing priorities, or how they don't, who within the companies make those decisions, and how they build their products is incredibly difficult to find.

This morning's testimony shed light on many of the areas that this Committee, and the public, have questions about. I look forward to building on that testimony with our second panel of witnesses who can speak directly to what steps Meta, YouTube, TikTok and Twitter are taking to stop the spread of extremist content on their platforms. Thank you all for joining us today.

As we heard from our panel this morning, as chief product and operating officers, you play key roles in your companies' decision-making processes. You set the agendas for the product teams who are constantly updating the apps and developing new features.

You play a prominent role in setting priorities and determining what tradeoffs to make among those priorities, as product teams launch new features or make changes to your apps.

This is the first time executives in your positions have appeared before Congress, and I appreciate you joining us for this opportunity to hear directly about your roles at these powerful companies.

The platforms you are representing today reach billions of people around the world. Meta's platforms reach more than 3.6 billion people a month. TikTok has more than a billion users a month. YouTube reaches almost 2 billion people a month. And Twitter has more than 200 million monthly users.

That reach is massive and so is the influence your platforms wield.

Whether users are fully aware of it or not, the content they see on your platforms shapes their reality. And the business decisions you make are one of the main driving forces of that phenomenon.

This amount of influence may have a minimal impact on the average user of your platforms, but we have seen firsthand how quickly dangerous and extremist content can proliferate online, especially to vulnerable communities or users already on the fringe and alter how people view the world.

Conspiracies like QAnon and Stop the Steal, hateful ideologies like white supremacy and Anti-Semitism, and so many more examples of harmful content, pollute your platforms.

This extremist content can spread like wildfire, amplified by the recommendation algorithms and other tools your teams build to increase your companies' audiences and profits.

Extremists use the products you design to recruit and radicalize followers and plot attacks, including the January 6th attack on the Capitol, our democracy, and our nation.

There is no question that there is a relationship between social media amplification of this extremist content, and the rise we have seen in hate crimes and domestic terrorist attacks that mark one of the gravest threats to our homeland security.

Despite this serious threat, I am concerned that your companies have still not taken the necessary steps to limit the spread of the hateful, dangerous, and extremist content that has motivated real-world violence.

So that we all understand exactly the type of extremist content we are discussing today and how challenging this problem is to tackle. I'd like to take a moment to show a few examples.

[Video Plays**]**

This morning, we heard from former executives that your companies have no incentive to effectively address the problem this content creates or prioritize the safety of your users, as you build and introduce new social media products.

Instead, like any for-profit company, your incentives are to prioritize user engagement, grow your platforms and generate revenue.

I have asked you to appear before the Committee today to answer questions about your companies' incentives and priorities, how those incentives are reflected in how you compensate and promote your product development engineers, managers and other employees, and to provide important insight on your decision-making processes.

Thank you again for joining us today. I'm looking forward to this conversation, so that our Committee, and the public, can better understand this serious problem and how it threatens the safety and security of our nation.