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January 27, 2020

Sundar Pichai
CEO
Google
1600 Amphitheatre Parkway
Mountain View, CA 94043

Dear Mr. Pichai,

In my correspondence to you last October,¹ I urged you to end Google's investments in groups that are actively blocking progress on climate action and that are promoting climate denial.

Today, I write with urgent concerns regarding a new report on the spread of dangerous climate misinformation on YouTube, a subsidiary of Google. According to the report, which was released this month,² YouTube has been driving millions of viewers to climate misinformation videos every day, a shocking revelation that runs contrary to Google's important missions of fighting misinformation and promoting climate action.

Over the past 15 years, YouTube has grown to become the most used social platform in the United States. About three out of every four American adults watch videos on the platform. And YouTube is especially popular among young people: nine out of every 10 Americans under the age of 30 use it.³

In the past, YouTube has been proactive about responding to the threats posed by harmful misinformation shared on its platform. Just last year, for example, YouTube removed economic incentives for channels that promoted anti-vaccination views, arguing that such content violated YouTube's rules against monetizing videos with "dangerous and harmful" content.⁴

Similarly, Google has been proactive about leading the fight against the climate crisis, displaying an important commitment to shifting the American economy toward a clean energy future. Last September,

¹ Rep. Kathy Castor, "Chair Castor Calls On Google To Stop Funding Climate Deniers" (October 16, 2019) Available at <https://climatecrisis.house.gov/news/press-releases/chair-castor-calls-google-stop-funding-climate-deniers>

² Avaaz, "Why is YouTube Broadcasting Climate Misinformation to Millions?" (January 2020) Available at https://secure.avaaz.org/campaign/en/youtube_climate_misinformation/

³ Andrew Perrin and Monica Anderson, "Share of U.S. adults using social media, including Facebook, is mostly unchanged since 2018" *Pew Research Center* (April 2019) Available at <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/04/10/share-of-u-s-adults-using-social-media-including-facebook-is-mostly-unchanged-since-2018/>

⁴ Caroline O'Donovan, "YouTube Just Demonetized Anti-Vax Channels" *Buzzfeed News* (February 2019) Available at <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/carolineodonovan/youtube-just-demonetized-anti-vax-channels>

you proudly declared that “sustainability has been one of Google’s core values from our earliest days,”⁵ as you announced “the biggest corporate purchase of renewable energy in history.”

As Chair of the Select Committee on the Climate Crisis, I’m committed to promoting ambitious federal policy that will help us solve one of the biggest challenges facing our planet. I also recognize the need to partner with members of the private sector, including Google, to take impactful action that will accelerate progress as we make sure the United States meets its climate goals. As we all work together to solve this crisis, we must also eliminate barriers to action, including those as pervasive and harmful as climate denial and climate misinformation.

That’s why I urge you to ensure that YouTube is not incentivizing climate misinformation content on its platform, or effectively giving free advertising to those who seek to protect polluters and their profits at the expense of the American people.

Specifically, YouTube can address these issues by taking the following steps:

- Stop promoting climate denial and climate disinformation videos by removing them immediately from the platform’s recommendation algorithm;
- Add ‘climate misinformation’ to the platform’s list of borderline content;
- Stop monetizing videos that promote harmful misinformation and falsehoods about the causes and effects of the climate crisis;
- Take steps to correct the record for millions of users who have been exposed to climate misinformation on YouTube.

Please respond by Friday, February 7, to describe any efforts you plan to take in order to address these important issues. If you have any questions, please contact Alison Cassady on the Select Committee on the Climate Crisis at Alison.Cassady@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



Chair Kathy Castor
U.S. House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis

⁵ Sundar Pichai, “Our biggest renewable energy purchase ever” *Google Blog* Available at <https://www.blog.google/outreach-initiatives/sustainability/our-biggest-renewable-energy-purchase-ever/>