



May 13, 2020

The Honorable Adam B. Schiff  
Chairman  
House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Schiff,

Thank you for your April 29 letter regarding YouTube's work to combat fraud and misinformation during this unprecedented time. I am pleased to share some additional information on YouTube's policies as well as specific actions we have taken to help address the many challenges faced online during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I share your view that we should work each day to provide timely, authoritative, and credible sources to anyone who comes to YouTube, and that this mission is even more critical as communities around the globe are impacted by COVID-19. To achieve this objective, our work is guided by four pillars: removing violative content, raising up authoritative content, reducing the spread of borderline content, and rewarding trusted creators—what I refer to as the 4Rs of responsibility.

As you know, YouTube's Community Guidelines govern what content is permissible and what content is violative on our platform. The consistent and impartial enforcement of our Community Guidelines is one of my highest priorities. Since February of this year, we have reviewed thousands of videos related to dangerous or misleading COVID-19 content, of which an overwhelming majority were proactively detected through our automated systems. The policy in our Community Guidelines under which we've removed most violative COVID-19 content so far is our "harmful or dangerous content policy," which prohibits content promoting dangerous remedies. For example, these include videos that claim harmful substances or treatments can cure COVID-19. Furthermore, content suggesting that COVID-19 symptoms are caused by anything other than the virus, including 5G towers, violates our policies and has been removed. In the case of borderline content that comes close to violating our policies but doesn't quite cross the line, we work to limit recommendations. To date, we have seen a significant decline in watchtime for this content and our work to improve here is ongoing.

In addition to removing harmful content consistent with our Community Guidelines, our commitment to raise authoritative content has allowed us to support governments and health authorities around the world in their efforts to get the latest accurate COVID-19 information, such as social distancing guidance, to our users. For example, last year, in some markets, we launched an information panel on our video watch page and in search results, which features a text box linking to third-party sources about events or subjects prone to misinformation. In March, we began pointing users to authoritative health information from the WHO, the CDC, or other relevant local health authorities when searching for or viewing content relating to COVID-19 and we expanded this feature around the world. I am proud that these COVID-19 panels have now received more than 20 billion impressions.

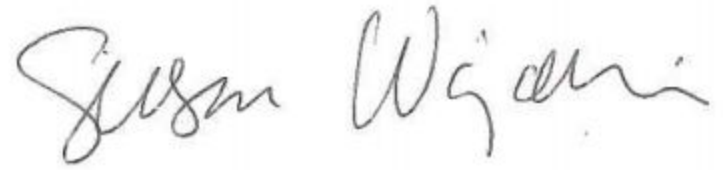
As you note in your letter, we have also recently expanded our fact check information panels, which we launched in Brazil and India last year, to the United States. Our fact check information panels provide additional context to users by highlighting relevant, third-party fact-checked articles above search results for relevant queries, so that our users can make their own informed decision about claims made.

The complex nature of misinformation online presents a number of challenges for platforms such as YouTube and I welcome your suggestions as to what we can do better. While we can't comment on the approaches of other companies, YouTube's goal is to provide context and authoritative information before or during viewer engagement, not after. For example, as mentioned above, users will see an information panel pointing them to authoritative sources such as the WHO and the CDC on the watch page of every video related to COVID-19. We have invested heavily to make sure that we surface authoritative content in our search results, which significantly reduces the spread of misinformation.

We also partner closely with researchers and elected officials from around the world to better understand the challenges of online misinformation and take their recommendations for improvement seriously. We are committed to working with Members of Congress as well as health experts around the world to better understand these challenges as we continue developing robust policy and product improvements that help keep people safe. I hope you will continue to share with me your views about our work.

Thank you again for your letter and I look forward to working with you on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Wojcicki". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Susan Wojcicki  
CEO, YouTube