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November 8, 2021

Mr. Evan Spiegel  
Chief Executive Officer  
Snap, Inc.  
2772 Donald Douglas Loop North  
Santa Monica, California 90405

Dear Mr. Spiegel,

I write to follow up on Snap's commitment to make its internal research, algorithms, and datasets on the effects of your platform on children and teens available to independent researchers, the public, and members of Congress. I request that Snap provides this information and the materials that Ms. Jennifer Stout committed to provide by November 24, 2021.

At the October 26, 2021, Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Consumer Protection, Product Safety, and Data Security hearing on protecting kids online, your representative agreed to provide me with your internal research on the mental health effects and addiction-like use of your platform by children and teens. Your representative also agreed to make your platform's datasets and algorithms accessible for independent researchers to assess these risks.<sup>1</sup> Thank you for your commitment, as this transparency and access is critical to identifying possible harms to young users and preventing their devastating consequences. As the subcommittee works to draft protections for kids online, this information is also vital to our legislative efforts.

During our subcommittee hearing, your representative testified that your company conducts research about its impact on children and teens' mental health. I expect that this includes research on issues such as the effects of your platforms on children and teens' suicidal thoughts, eating disorders, negative self-image or body dysmorphia, addictive usage, or other indications of mental health issues, which are often exacerbated for historically marginalized communities. I further expect this to include user experience design testing, marketing studies, and other product work in addition to safety research.

Your representative also testified that you provide datasets and information about your algorithms to external researchers to independently study and assess the impact that your platform has on children and teens. Researchers should be able to effectively study these profound risks without being undermined or blocked by opaque data practices, burdensome non-

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, *Protecting Kids Online: Snapchat, TikTok, and YouTube*, 117th Cong., 1st sess., 2021.

disclosure requirements, barriers to collecting information, legal threats, or an unwillingness to engage on the part of tech companies. I expect Snap ensures that researchers are provided with the necessary resources for rigorous study based on appropriate and relevant datasets and tools and are not constrained from open publication of their findings, as long as the privacy and safety of users is protected.<sup>2</sup>

I respectfully request the following information and documents by November 24, 2021:

1. Please provide the full internal research on Snapchat's effect on children and teens' mental health and well-being to my office as your representative committed to do.
2. If Snap plans to withhold any internal research regarding children and teens' mental health and well-being contrary to that commitment, please detail what research it will not provide and its reasons for doing so.
3. How does Snap currently support requests regarding access to its datasets and information about its algorithms from any independent researcher (i.e., any academic or civil society researcher who is not an employee of or subcontractor for Snap) that wishes to study children and teens' mental health and well-being?
4. If Snap restricts the types of research, datasets, studies, or other relevant information or freedom to publish findings for independent researchers, please detail these restrictions and its reasons for doing so.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senate

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<sup>2</sup> Technical experts, academics, and other researchers have set out requests and recommendations that are a laudable blueprint to support safe and effective data-sharing. Brandi Geurkink, "Our Recommendation to YouTube," *Mozilla Foundation*, October 14, 2019, <https://foundation.mozilla.org/en/blog/our-recommendation-youtube/>.