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June 1, 2020

Mark Zuckerberg  
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer  
Facebook, Inc.  
1 Hacker Way  
Menlo Park, California 94025

Dear Mr. Zuckerberg,

I write to urge you to address the proliferation of disinformation on Facebook, specifically as it pertains to political speech. As I have expressed to you in previous communications, promoting harmful or false content on your platform distorts our political conversations. This is especially troubling as we approach a presidential election.

The recent decision by Twitter to apply warning labels to President Trump's tweets<sup>1</sup> shows that social media companies can both allow users to exercise their freedom of speech and prevent false or potentially harmful content from spreading across their platforms. The President's response to this action—threatening to “punish Facebook, YouTube, or other platforms that interfered with his ability to communicate directly with his followers”<sup>2</sup> — should not discourage you from following in Twitter's footsteps.

Although I agree with your statement, “political speech is one of the most sensitive parts in a democracy, and people should be able to see what politicians say,” it's baffling to read that in the same interview on May 28, 2020, you continue to maintain that Facebook should not fact-check posts by politicians.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, as reported by *Axios*, you spoke to the President on May 30, 2020.<sup>4</sup> That same day you posted that would not take down a one of his posts referencing police brutality in Minnesota.<sup>5</sup> I cannot help but wonder if your position is based in part on the revenue generated by political advertisers. Your refusal to fact-check public officials and politicians<sup>6</sup> represents a major gap in your efforts to ensure the veracity of content on your site, and it is in direct contradiction with your mission to “give people the power to build community and bring

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/28/technology/trump-twitter-fact-check.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/29/technology/trump-twitter.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/05/28/zuckerberg-facebook-twitter-should-not-fact-check-political-speech.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.axios.com/trump-facebook-zuckerberg-phone-call-d8d1016e-4e17-4906-b4f4-dc3e5c00bca7.html>;  
<https://www.facebook.com/zuck/posts/10111961824369871>

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.businessinsider.com/facebook-political-ads-fact-check-policy-explained-2019-11>

the world closer together.”<sup>7</sup> Your own employees disagree with your position, as they made clear on June 1, 2020 by staging a virtual walkout.<sup>8</sup> More than a dozen employees tweeted their explicit disagreement with your stance.<sup>9</sup> Bringing the world together with posts that incite hate and spread misinformation is certainly not the goal you set to achieve, and is not the right of way of building communities or conducting a business.

Given the tenor of our political times, and the effects that a single post can have in inciting violence,<sup>10</sup> Facebook has a responsibility to take concrete steps to curtail the spread this type of content from political sources. Adding warning labels to content that incites violence or misrepresent facts is a reasonable and achievable goal that would limit the spread of this content without compromising freedom of speech. Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Robert Menendez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Robert" and last name "Menendez" clearly legible. Below the signature is a horizontal line.

United States Senator

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<sup>7</sup> <https://investor.fb.com/resources/default.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/01/technology/facebook-employee-protest-trump.html>

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> <https://time.com/5845533/trump-george-floyd-protest-white-house/>