

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-3302**

October 11, 2024

Mark Zuckerberg  
Chief Executive Officer  
Meta Platforms, Inc.  
1 Hacker Way  
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Linda Yaccarino  
Chief Executive Officer  
X Corp.  
1355 Market Street  
San Francisco, CA 94103

Shou Zi Chew  
Chief Executive Officer  
TikTok, Inc.  
5800 Bristol Parkway, Suite 100  
Culver City, CA 90230

Jason Citron  
Chief Executive Officer  
Discord, Inc.  
444 De Haro Street, Suite 200  
San Francisco, CA 94107

Neal Mohan  
Chief Executive Officer  
YouTube, LLC  
901 Cherry Avenue  
San Bruno, CA 94066

Evan Spiegel  
Chief Executive Officer  
Snap, Inc.  
3000 31st Street  
Santa Monica, CA 90405

Adam Mosseri  
Chief Executive Officer  
Instagram  
1 Hacker Way  
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Dear Mr. Zuckerberg, Ms. Yaccarino, Mr. Chew, Mr. Citron, Mr. Mohan, Mr. Spiegel, and Mr. Mosseri:

We write to your platforms with an urgent request on behalf of states affected by the devastation of Hurricane Helene and those currently being impacted by Hurricane Milton. In the aftermath of Helene, we have witnessed a troubling surge in misinformation, disinformation, conspiracy theories, and scams that are hindering recovery efforts and exploiting vulnerable individuals and families. This trend has continued through Hurricane Milton's landfall and is becoming a troubling fixture of social media discourse surrounding natural disasters. We urge your companies to do substantially more to combat these dangerous trends, which have exacerbated the challenges facing communities during this critical period of storm recovery and preparation.

The severity of this issue is difficult to overstate. In North Carolina alone, numerous false claims about the storm's origin, government assistance, and the availability of disaster relief funds have been spreading across platforms. In the days following Hurricane Helene, we have seen posts encouraging people to

apply for fake Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) relief programs, scams targeting those who have lost their homes, and misleading information about where to find shelter and resources<sup>1</sup>.

For example, a series of widely circulated posts on Facebook and X falsely claimed that FEMA was offering a new grant for immediate cash assistance to all residents, regardless of impact, resulting in a flood of applications to non-existent programs.<sup>2</sup> These scams took advantage of families who were already in distress, further delaying their ability to access legitimate aid. Similarly, on Instagram, TikTok, and Discord, conspiracy theories have spread claiming that both storms are the result of government actions.<sup>3</sup> It was particularly disturbing to see that, prior to Hurricane Milton's landfall, meteorologists experienced harassment and even received death threats from users on X.<sup>4</sup>

Disaster response agencies, climate scientists and rescue organizations work tirelessly to provide critical information and render assistance to those impacted by catastrophic events. The lies, scams, and conspiracies widely circulating on your platforms compromise their ability to work effectively and place the lives and safety of Americans at risk. Moreover, this distracts from the real challenges we face and sows division in our communities when they are already in crisis.

Misinformation not only delays the recovery process but also erodes public trust in institutions that are essential to helping our states to rebuild. It is critical that the American people know where to turn for reliable information during these emergencies, and your platforms play a significant role in shaping those sources of information.

It is clear that much more needs to be done, particularly in the context of disaster recovery. We, therefore, urge you to:

1. **Increase the monitoring and rapid removal of misinformation and disinformation related to disaster recovery efforts**, particularly from verified or large-reaching accounts that have the potential to do significant harm.
2. **Enhance fact-checking partnerships with local agencies and disaster relief organizations**, ensuring that accurate information about government programs, emergency shelters, and aid is readily available and prioritized across your platforms.
3. **Strengthen algorithms to flag and prevent the spread of harmful conspiracy theories** that target disaster victims,
4. **Implement stronger safeguards against scams** that prey on vulnerable individuals during disaster recovery, including ensuring that only verified organizations and entities can promote relief funds or disaster assistance programs.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.npr.org/2024/10/07/nx-s1-5144159/fema-funding-migrants-disaster-relief-fund>

<sup>2</sup> <https://consumer.ftc.gov/consumer-alerts/2024/10/recovery-scams-will-follow-hurricane-helene-heres-how-spot-them>

<sup>3</sup> <https://grist.org/extreme-weather/fact-checking-the-wild-conspiracies-in-the-wake-of-hurricane-helene/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/hurricane-milton-misinformation-meteorologist-death-threats-1235130352/>

You have the power and the responsibility to improve the digital spaces where millions of Americans both seek and promote information during crises, including natural disasters. Again, we strongly encourage you to act quickly and decisively to address the clear dangers posed by the spread of misinformation, disinformation, and scams in the wake of these storms. Lives, livelihoods, and the integrity of our recovery efforts depend on it. We stand ready to work with you to ensure that we protect those affected by these disasters and future emergencies.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



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Deborah K. Ross  
Member of Congress



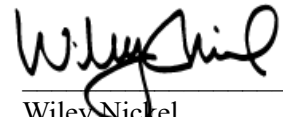
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Kathy Castor  
Member of Congress



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Nikema Williams  
Member of Congress



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Wiley Nickel  
Member of Congress