

House Committee on Oversight and Accountability
Written Statement of
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Chairman Comer, Ranking Member Raskin, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this opening statement.

After a decade as a corporate lawyer, I joined Twitter in 2011 as the first member of the corporate legal team. In 2013, I was promoted to general counsel; in 2018, I became the chief legal officer and continued in that role until October 2022. During my time at Twitter, I had many distinct teams reporting to me, including legal, trust & safety, public policy, corporate security, and compliance.

I was drawn to work at Twitter because I was inspired by how people were able to use the platform and awed by its potential. Twitter enabled anyone to hear directly from any individual instantly. People from around the world were coming together on Twitter for an open and free exchange of ideas. The work was challenging and fulfilling.

After Jack Dorsey returned as CEO in 2015, one of his top priorities became what we called the “health of the public conversation.” This was based on customer research, advertiser feedback, and Twitter’s declining revenue, user growth, and stock price. Teams across Twitter focused more on making the platform safer, better, and more profitable. As an executive of the company, I also was responsible for helping to achieve the corporate goals Mr. Dorsey set and was accountable to him, the Board of Directors, and ultimately Twitter’s public shareholders.

As we prioritized the health of the public conversation, we did not lose sight of what Twitter was for most people: a place to talk about their favorite things. Topics that animated the platform ranged from K-Pop, to the World Cup, to video games and movies. We needed to ensure that differences of opinion would not cross the line into, for example, sending death threats to soccer players who missed important goals, distributing nonconsensual intimate photos, or cyberbullying so vicious that it could compromise a teenager’s mental health.

Twitter’s platform rules covered a wide range of conduct and changed over time based on new behaviors and harms on the platform and feedback from customers, regulators, governments, advertisers, researchers, and others. This feedback led to a principles-based approach which we applied to an array of different, yet equally complicated, situations around the world. These rules were also benchmarked against industry standards. We all knew how difficult it would be to design—much less apply—one set of global rules for hundreds of millions of accounts that shared billions of Tweets a week.

While I was at Twitter, the company never lost sight of its deep commitment to promoting and defending free expression around the world. For example, to protect human rights defenders, we fought for the right of people to use pseudonyms on the platform. We litigated in courts around the world to protect the rights of people using Twitter to express their opinions, often defending them against their own governments who were acting unlawfully or violating international human

rights. And we took extra precautions to ensure we scrutinized or challenged—and never just acquiesced to—government legal demands.

Defending free expression and maintaining the health of the platform required difficult judgment calls. Most applications of Twitter’s rules were fact-intensive, subject to internal debate, and needed to be made quickly. We recognized that after applying our rules, we might learn that some of them did not work as we imagined and that we would have to update them. We always remained open to new information from our customers and critics regarding our policies and enforcement. At times, we also reversed course.

For example, on October 14, 2020, the *New York Post* tweeted articles about Hunter Biden’s laptop with embedded images that looked like they may have been obtained through hacking. In 2018, we had developed a policy intended to prevent Twitter from becoming a dumping ground for hacked materials. We applied this policy to the *New York Post*’s Tweets and blocked links to articles embedding the source materials. At no point did Twitter otherwise prevent tweeting, reporting, discussing or describing the contents of Mr. Biden’s laptop. People could and did talk about the contents of the laptop on Twitter or anywhere else, including other, much larger platforms, but they were prevented from sharing the primary documents on Twitter.

Still, over the course of that day, it became clear that Twitter had not fully appreciated the potential impact of the policy on the free press and others. As Mr. Dorsey testified before Congress on multiple occasions, Twitter changed its policy within 24 hours and admitted its initial action was wrong. This policy revision immediately allowed people to tweet the original articles with the embedded source material. Relying on its longstanding practice not to retroactively apply new policies, Twitter informed the *New York Post* that it could immediately begin tweeting when it deleted the original Tweets, which would have freed them to tweet the exact same content and news articles again. The *New York Post* chose not to delete its original Tweets, so Twitter made an exception after two weeks to retroactively apply the new policy to the *New York Post*’s Tweets. In hindsight, Twitter should have reinstated the *New York Post*’s account immediately given the circumstances.

There is no easy way to run a global communications platform that satisfies business and revenue goals, individual customer expectations, local laws, and cultural norms—and get it right every time. Still, while I was at Twitter, we worked hard every day to make Twitter a healthy platform, and ultimately, a healthy business.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to your questions.