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January 16, 2019

Mr. Jack Dorsey  
Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder  
Twitter, Inc.  
1355 Market Street  
Suite 900  
San Francisco, CA 94103

### **RE: Twitter Named to 2019 Dirty Dozen List for Facilitating Sexual Exploitation**

Dear Messrs. Dorsey and Kordestani:

We write with concerns regarding Twitter's facilitation and promotion of sexual exploitation. Twitter has made minor improvements in the past few years. In March of 2017 to block the direct searches for pornographic or misogynistic materials in the "photos" and "videos" tabs. Further, in December of 2017, Twitter announced it would better enforce its rules about abusive and hateful content. Twitter now claims to block "hateful content," as well as content that is degrading or abusive or promotes "sexist tropes," or that "reduce someone to less than human."<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, these efforts have not been enough to stem the rising flood of sexual exploitation on this platform.

Twitter is filled with pornography that supports rape myths, normalizes adult-with-teen-themed and incest-themed exploitation, and reinforces degrading racially charged sexual stereotypes. Further, Twitter is being used to advertise prostituted persons and sex trafficking victims for purposes of commercial sexual exploitation. Disturbingly, recent news reports show that pedophiles have also begun migrating to Twitter, and no doubt use Direct Messages and other tools to share information about accessing child sexual abuse images (i.e., child pornography).<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, we are writing to inform you that Twitter has been placed on the 2019 Dirty Dozen List, which names 12 leading mainstream contributors to sexual exploitation and abuse in America. Twitter was previously named to this list in 2013, 2017 and 2018.

To be removed from this list, we ask Twitter to initiate more robust policies against pornographic content and programs to regularly sweep

through images and keywords to remove accounts, Periscope streams, and web links that include pornographic material or advertisements for pornographic material and/or prostitution.

Currently, Twitter rules state that “Twitter allows some forms of graphic violence and/or adult content in Tweets marked as containing sensitive media. However, you may not use such content in live video, your profile or header images.”<sup>3</sup> Not only is this policy not enforced, but it also makes an allowance for pornographic content that leaves Twitter open to becoming the premiere destination for a multitude of sexual exploitation issues, including sex trafficking advertisements and child sexual abuse images.

As you know, Apple’s App Store recently removed the Tumblr app due to concerns about child sexual abuse images on that site. Likewise, we believe Twitter needs to address these issues holistically in order to avoid a similar outcome.

Further, we would like to dialogue with Twitter about improving its sign-up system to ensure every Twitter account could be linked back to a real person in the case of a sex trafficking, prostitution, or child pornography criminal investigation. As it stands now, it is easy for individuals to create anonymous Twitter accounts via anonymous emails, which are separated from the users’ identity, which impedes investigations into criminal activity.

### **Pornography is Being Used to Advertise for Sex Trafficking and Prostitution on Twitter**

As our society has increasingly entered the digital age, so have sex traffickers and pimps.

It is an accepted fact, supported by survivors of sex trafficking, that pornographic pictures and videos are used to advertise for both sex trafficking and prostitution victims (including minors.) Further, law enforcement is finding that many sex trafficking victims,<sup>4</sup> and child sexual abuse imagery (i.e. child pornography) victims,<sup>5</sup> are coerced into creating livestream or webcam pornography as well.

Accounts posting and selling pornographic content, from images to videos to livestreams, and even requests for sugar baby/mommy dates, are undeniably flourishing on Twitter. The below screenshots were found on January 7, 2019—we did not include the more graphic posts of visually pornographic content, though these are easy for any user to stumble across.





**As long as your platform continues to allow pornography, and fails to remove ads for sex acts (whether recorded, live streamed, or in person) it is impossible to distinguish between those that are allegedly willingly distributing pornographic content and those whose pages are being managed by a sex trafficker or pimp.**

It has been documented by law enforcement that pimps and sex traffickers often either coerce trafficking or child sexual abuse victims into making such advertising posts, or create the posts themselves in their victim's name. This is what was found to happen on Backpage.com—the notorious classifieds ads website that was recently shut down by the Department of Justice for knowingly facilitating sex trafficking.

This leaves your company not only vulnerable to a detrimental public image crisis, but also allow harms your goals for the platform. You want Twitter to be a place for “free expression” where “every voice has the power to impact the world.”<sup>6</sup> But how can Twitter promote free expression while allowing sexual slavery advertisements? We ask that Twitter commit to promoting freedom from sexual exploitation on its platform, and believe that Twitter would distinguish itself as a socially responsible leader among social media platforms if it addresses these issues.

We would be glad to dialogue with you on any of these points, and request that you inform us of any policy and enforcement changes. We can be contacted at 202-393-7245 or [public@ncose.com](mailto:public@ncose.com).

Sincerely,

Patrick Trueman  
President & CEO

Dawn Hawkins  
Senior Vice President & Executive Director

CC: Omid Kordestani, Executive Chairman, Board of Directors

<sup>1</sup> “Enforcing New Rules to Reduce Hateful Conduct and Abusive Behavior.” *Twitter*, [blog.twitter.com/official/en\\_us/topics/company/2017/safetypoliciesdec2017.html](https://blog.twitter.com/official/en_us/topics/company/2017/safetypoliciesdec2017.html).

<sup>2</sup> Himanshu Arora, “Chatter suggests pedophiles have swarmed to Twitter following Tumblr porn ban.” January 2019. <https://piunikaweb.com/2019/01/06/chatter-suggests-tumblr-pedophiles-have-swarmed-to-twitter-following-adult-content-ban/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://help.twitter.com/en/rules-and-policies/media-policy>. Accessed January 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Sunshine de Leon, “Cyber-sex trafficking: A 21st century” 2013. [scourgehttps://www.cnn.com/2013/07/17/world/asia/philippines-cybersex-trafficking/index.html](https://www.cnn.com/2013/07/17/world/asia/philippines-cybersex-trafficking/index.html)

<sup>5</sup> Martha Mendoza and Jim Gomez, “AP Exclusive: Big child webcam sex bust reveals rising abuse” 2017. <https://www.apnews.com/74b81f79e9024124a1cfe43a0ce9eec2>

<sup>6</sup> [https://about.twitter.com/en\\_us/values.html](https://about.twitter.com/en_us/values.html)