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November 28, 2023

Robert A. Iger
CEO, The Walt Disney Company
500 S Buena Vista St
Burbank, CA 91521

Re: Urgent Request to Sever Ties with Meta Due to Disturbing Content on Instagram's Reels and Systemic Child Sexual Exploitation Across Platforms

Dear Mr. Iger,

On behalf of the National Center on Sexual Exploitation – a nonpartisan nonprofit in Washington, DC, dedicated to addressing all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation – I am requesting that Disney immediately suspend its partnership with Meta Platforms due to extensive child sexual exploitation. Your association with a platform that facilitates the distribution of explicit and harmful material is not only ethically wrong, but is in stark contrast to Disney's stated purpose and social responsibility values.

While we were deeply disturbed, we were not surprised at the recent revelations outlined in the Wall Street Journal's article dated November 27, 2023, titled "[Instagram's Algorithm Delivers Toxic Video Mix to Adults Who Follow Children](#)." The WSJ findings are consistent with the harms our own researchers have uncovered over several years of monitoring and investigating Meta: sexualization of children, algorithms pushing increasingly disturbing and inappropriate content to children and pedophiles alike, adult nudity.

Unfortunately, those are only a few of the harms enabled by Meta. As you likely know, there is an extensive and rapidly growing body of evidence that Meta systemically fails to protect children and *chooses* profit over their safety and well-being – even when *they know* they are hurting their youngest users.

In the past month alone, in addition to the WSJ piece, Meta has come under fire multiple times for multiple ills:

⇒ An unsealed complaint in a lawsuit brought against Meta by 33 US Attorneys General showed that "[At Meta, Millions of Underage](#)

[Users Were an ‘Open Secret,’ States Say](#)” – something Meta “zealously protected from disclosure to the public.” (*New York Times*, November 25, 2023)

- ⇒ Senate Judiciary leadership issued an [invitation to Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg to testify in front of Congress on December 6 about Meta’s failure to stem child sex abuse](#).
- ⇒ The latest report by a leading child safety organization showed that **three of the top five platforms where minors ages 9 – 17 reported having an online sexual experience were Meta-owned**: Facebook, Instagram, and Messenger tied for 2nd place at 13%. Snapchat was 15%. (Thorn: [Youth Perspectives on Online Safety, 2022: an Annual Report of Youth Attitudes and Experiences](#), November 14, 2023)
- ⇒ Once again, a former employee and whistleblower exposed Meta for ignoring harms to children and choosing profit over child protection. Whistleblower Bejar found that 1 in 3 young teens had been subjected to unwanted sexual advances on Instagram. ([His Job Was to Make Instagram Safe for Teens. His 14 Year Old Showed Him What the App Was Really Like](#), *Wall Street Journal*, November 2, 2023) [Arturo Bejar then testified in front of Congress](#) on November 7, 2023.
- ⇒ A Canadian sexual exploitation tipline reports rising numbers of sextortion, with 80% of the reports mentioning either Instagram or Snapchat, with reports split roughly equal in numbers. Meta-owned Facebook and WhatsApp are also in the top five identified apps. The Canadian Centre for Child Protection says “[these companies] are not taking the necessary actions to ensure the safety of the individuals on their platform.” (*CBC*, [Social media apps that facilitate sextortion blamed for not doing enough to prevent it](#), November 2, 2023)

Do you need more evidence? In the past six months:

- ⇒ *The Guardian* ran a two-year investigative piece in April 2023 about [Instagram serving as a Marketplace for Sex Trafficking](#), featuring NCOSE Wake Up Instagram campaign partner, Courtney’s House.
- ⇒ [Wall Street Journal and Stanford Internet Observatory \(SIO\) investigation re vast pedophile networks on Instagram](#) (June 2023) cited that “Instagram is currently the [most important platform](#) for these networks with features like recommendation algorithms and direct messaging that help connect buyers and sellers.” NCOSE and ally Collective Shout in Australia had been raising existence of these networks and providing extensive evidence to Instagram of this to no effect since 2019.
- ⇒ [41 US State Attorneys General sued Meta](#), claiming its social platforms are addictive and harm children’s mental health.

Still not convinced? Within the past year, Instagram alone was found to be:

- ⇒ [#1 platform for the highest rates of sextortion](#) (Instagram 42%, Snapchat 38%, “*by far the most frequently used social media environments where victims were targeted*” (Canadian Centre for Child Protection, August 2022))
- ⇒ [#1 platform minors reported potentially harmful experiences](#) (Thorn Report, February 2023)
- ⇒ [#2 parent-reported platform for sexually explicit requests to children](#); Facebook named #1 (Parents Together report *Afraid, Uncertain, and Overwhelmed: A Survey of Parents on Online Sexual Exploitation of Children*, survey of 1,000 parents, April 2023)
- ⇒ [#2 platform where minors have had a sexual experience with an adult](#), tied with Kik and Tumblr (Thorn Report, February 2023)
- ⇒ [#2 for highest rates of minors reporting any sexual experiences](#) (Thorn Report, Feb 2023)

- ⇒ Only platform listed in [top 5 worst in every single one of Bark's Annual Report categories](#): severe sexual content, severe suicidal ideation, depression, body image concerns, severe bullying, hate speech, severe violence (Bark 2022 Annual Report analyzed more than 4.5 billion messages across text, email, YouTube, and 30+ apps and social media platforms)
- ⇒ Correlated with higher rates of parent-reported [children sharing sexual images of themselves](#) – a form of child sexual abuse material (Parents Together, April 2023)

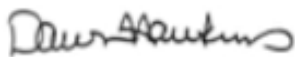
NCOSE has been advocating directly with Meta for years and we have also led multiple, successful public campaigns to stem rampant sex trafficking, pedophile networks, sextortion, image-based sexual abuse, pornography exposure to minors, and a host of other harms. Most recently, NCOSE placed Instagram on the annual [2023 Dirty Dozen List](#). Meta was on the [2022 Dirty Dozen List](#) for negligence as a parent company. While Meta has made some changes in the past few years, they are clearly not having a substantive effect as the harms continue to metastasize.

The recent WSJ findings should be more than enough reason for a family-family brand like Disney to cut ties. After all, adult dating sites like Bumble and Match have taken a stand – refusing to run the risk of having their brands marketed to predators and pedophiles. Given the vast and very public proof of Meta's failures to protect kids – whether due to lack of sufficient resources (at best) or callous indifference in pursuit of the bottom line (at worst) – **if Disney continues its relationship with Meta at this point, your company is knowingly contributing to sexual exploitation and a host of other harms against children.**

We understand that the decision to sever ties with a major platform that undoubtedly drives profits for Disney involves careful consideration. But the well-being of children and the preservation of Disney's reputation should be paramount. We trust that Disney, as a leader in the entertainment industry, will take swift and decisive action to end any partnerships with Meta Platforms until such time that adequate measures are implemented to ensure the safety and appropriateness of the content across all other Meta-owned platforms. Please live up to your values and social responsibility commitments.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. Our organization and supporters look forward to hearing about the steps Disney will take to address these concerns and to ensure the well-being of its audience.

Respectfully,



Dawn Hawkins
CEO

Cc:
Tinisha Agramonte, Senior Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer
Asad Ayaz, Chief Brand Officer
Alan Bergman, Co-Chairman
Horacio Gutierrez, General Counsel and Chief Compliance Officer
Jolene Negre, Associate Counsel and Secretary
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