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November 2, 2020

The Honorable William P. Barr
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Barr:

With the COVID-19 pandemic forcing children to spend more time online, a new threat to their safety has emerged in the form of [onlyfans.com](https://www.onlyfans.com) (OnlyFans). I am concerned that this website has become a major marketplace for buying and selling sex in the United States and around the world and vulnerable children could be in harm's way. As Ranking Member of the Appropriations Committee and a member of the Congressional Human Trafficking Caucus, I write today to call your attention to this website and request that you examine the threat this platform poses to minors and ensure that all applicable laws are being followed.

Launched in 2016, OnlyFans is a content-sharing platform that allows content creators to earn money online from their "fans." It hosts creators from various genres, but the site has become particularly popular for the pornography it offers. OnlyFans allows content creators to receive payments directly from their fans on a monthly basis through subscriptions, as well as through tips. It also offers users the ability to charge customers for additional pay-per-view content. Its popularity surged in 2020, and in September, it had more than 166 million visitors (48% of which were from the U.S.) and was the 103rd most visited website in the United States.

I am concerned that OnlyFans may be enabling the flow of child pornography through its portal. The website does not require its content creators to provide identification before opening an account and uploading content (although it does require identification to charge for content or accept tips). This raises concerns about whether minors are posting free content or defeating the identification measures, as well as whether the website is sufficiently ensuring that the subjects or performers in creators' content are verified to be adults. In addition, because OnlyFans actively encourages and profits from the sale of sexual content and establishes a platform for the purchasers of sexual content to communicate and coordinate directly with the persons depicted in such content, I am concerned that OnlyFans may be used to facilitate the solicitation of prostitution.

As we have seen all too often, online platforms are magnets for the recruitment and advertising of sex trafficking victims, and predators regularly use these platforms to exploit victims both online and offline. The Justice Department's takedown of Backpage.com was an opportunity for the technology community to make a significant dent in efforts to deter, prevent, and enforce sex trafficking crimes conducted or facilitated online. However, this necessary action only temporarily harmed the supply – not the demand – for online methods to engage in sex trafficking. Unfortunately, it appears OnlyFans may have stepped into this void.

I strongly believe that much greater scrutiny of OnlyFans is warranted. Therefore, I ask the Department of Justice to investigate whether OnlyFans has in place sufficient safeguards to ensure subjects or performers are, in fact, adults and free from coercion, force, or fraud, as well as to ensure communications with the persons depicted in these commercial sex acts do not solicit or constitute sex trafficking activity. I also recommend that you investigate whether OnlyFans gains access to the benefits and network of financial institutions through the use of falsely represented Merchant Category Codes.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to your response. Please contact Stephanie Gadbois on my Appropriations Committee staff at stephanie.gadbois@mail.house.gov or (202) 225-3481 if you need additional information about these concerns.

Sincerely,



Kay Granger
Member of Congress