



January 15, 2021

Will Castleberry
Facebook Public Policy
wcastleberry@fb.com

Dear Mr. Castleberry:

Following the appalling attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, Facebook made public assurances that it is “treating these events as an emergency,” including by removing user-generated content encouraging criminal activity at the Capitol.¹ In light of warnings by the nation’s law enforcement of further attacks in the District of Columbia and across the country ahead of the inauguration of President-Elect Joseph Biden, our Office writes to urgently ask that Facebook take further proactive steps by removing advertising content that could encourage and enable political violence in the coming week. Specifically, ***we request that the Company immediately place a moratorium on ads for weapons accessories and armor until January 22, 2021, or until such time as the heightened threat of extremist violence subsides.***

We expect and hope that Facebook is committed to taking all possible steps to minimize the use of its platform to incite political violence. Nevertheless, it has come to our attention through recent reporting that the Company is continuing to deploy its powerful targeted advertising capabilities to promote the sale of military tactical gear, including by serving ads for weapons accessories to Facebook user accounts that follow extremist content, and by presenting these ads in connection with posts that promote election misinformation viewpoints.² It has been widely reported that some of the rioters who perpetrated the January 6, 2021, attack wore military-style tactical gear in preparation for a confrontation. Particularly during this volatile time, we believe that Facebook’s microtargeted advertising of such gear, including to audiences that have an affinity for extremist content and election misinformation, could promote and facilitate further politically motivated attacks. Halting this advertising while the nation prepares to respond to an unprecedented

¹ Facebook, Our Response to the Violence in Washington, January 6, 2021, <https://about.fb.com/news/2021/01/responding-to-the-violence-in-washington-dc/>.

² Ryan Mac and Craig Silverman, *Facebook Has Been Showing Military Gear Ads Next To Insurrection Posts*, January 13, 2021, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/ryanmac/facebook-profits-military-gear-ads-capitol-riot>.

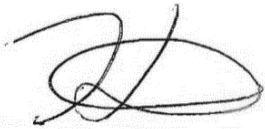
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domestic threat is a simple action that Facebook can take to support this response and to help prevent another emergency like the one the country experienced on January 6.

In the days following the events at the Capitol, Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg assured the public that Facebook does not profit from extremist content on its platform. Accordingly, we ask that Facebook stand behind this statement, and not give profit precedence over public safety, by temporarily removing advertising that could directly or indirectly contribute to further violent and insurrectionist activity.

Sincerely,



KARL A. RACINE
District of Columbia Attorney General



KWAME RAOUL
Illinois Attorney General



MAURA HEALEY
Massachusetts Attorney General



GURBIR S. GREWAL
New Jersey Attorney General