

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 14, 2023

Mr. Bill Ready
Chief Executive Officer
Pinterest
505 Brannan Street
San Francisco, CA 94107

Dear Mr. Ready:

We write regarding the recent NBC News report that highlighted how pedophiles are using Pinterest to entice and target underage girls as young as nine years old.¹ This report details how Pinterest enables adult men to “pin” images and videos of and create boards dedicated to the sexualization of underage girls. Additionally, NBC News found that Pinterest’s recommendation engine literally “serve[d] up photos and videos of visibly underage girls, including toddlers, in large quantities to a user seeking out this type of imagery.” This included photos and videos of young children dancing and posing in clothes like pajama shorts, bathing suits, and leotards. Even more egregious, Pinterest apparently took little to no action to prevent adult men from posting sexually suggestive comments on minors’ photos and messaging them directly.

This report is particularly disappointing given that Pinterest has branded itself the “last positive corner of the internet.” Pinterest often holds out its content reporting mechanisms and age assurance practices to prevent underage users from using the platform, including in meetings with Congressional staff. The company has also emphasized its commitment to youth mental health and privacy and making that a top priority for the company, a laudable goal given the impacts of other social media platforms on mental health. Unfortunately, according to the issues found in the report, Pinterest has fallen short of these aspirations.

As the authors of the bipartisan *Kids Online Safety Act*, we believe that the social media platforms have profound moral and social obligations to protect children and teens from mental health risks, sexual exploitation, and other harms. While Pinterest has taken steps to address several of the issues identified in NBC News’ report, it should not have taken national media coverage of such graphic misuse targeting young children to prompt action. We encourage Pinterest to live up to its ideal as the positive corner of the internet, and to support legislation such as the Kids Online Safety Act.

In light of this report, we ask that you respond by April 4, 2023 to the following questions:

¹ Jesselyn Cook, *Men on Pinterest are creating sex-themed image boards of little girls. The platform makes it easy*, March 9, 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/internet/pinterest-algorithm-young-girls-videos-grown-men-investigation-rcna72469>.

1. What are Pinterest's practices with respect to identifying and removing pins, boards, and comments that are sexually suggestive of minors and/or may constitute child sexual abuse material, sexual trafficking of minors, or enticement?
2. Does Pinterest perform content moderation in-house or does it contract with third-party content moderators?
 - a. If Pinterest uses third-party content moderators, please identify them.
 - b. If Pinterest uses third-party content moderators, how does the company exercise ongoing management with respect to the operations of content moderators?
3. What are Pinterest's practices for complying with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), including identifying and removing underage users and obtaining parental consent for minors who use the platform?
4. In the NBC News Report, Pinterest highlighted new features it planned to roll out in the future, including a function to enable users to report boards and new options for flagging individual profiles.
 - a. What spurred these specific changes?
 - b. Why did Pinterest not previously offer this functionality?
5. Does Pinterest restrict messaging functionality in any way to prevent minors from receiving communications from other users, particularly adults? Why or why not?
6. Does Pinterest restrict the "following" function in any way to prevent minors from being followed by other users, particularly adults? Why or why not?
7. Are Pinterest users who are minors permitted to create secret boards on the platform? What tools does Pinterest use to prevent those boards from being used to facilitate enticement, sex trafficking of minors, and CSAM?
8. Has Pinterest ever obtained an audit or done an internal review of its practices pertaining to the detection and removal of child sex abuse material, enticement, or sex trafficking of minors?

We look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



Marsha Blackburn
United States Senate



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senate