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Advocates call for FTC action to rein in Meta's abusive practices targeting kids and teens

Letter from 28 organizations in tech advocacy, children's rights, and health supports FTC action to halt Meta's profiting off of young users' sensitive data

BOSTON/ WASHINGTON DC–June 13, 2023– A coalition of leading advocacy organizations is standing up today to support the Federal Trade Commission's recent order reining in Meta's abusive practices aimed at kids and teens.

Twenty-eight groups, led by the Center for Digital Democracy, the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC), Fairplay, and U.S. PIRG, sent a [letter](#) to the FTC saying "Meta has violated the law and its consent decrees with the Commission repeatedly and flagrantly for over a decade, putting the privacy of all users at risk. In particular, we support the proposal to prohibit Meta from profiting from the data of children and teens under 18. This measure is justified by Meta's repeated offenses involving the personal data of minors and by the unique and alarming risks its practices pose to children and teens."

Comments from advocates:

Katharina Kopp, Director of Policy, Center for Digital Democracy:

"The FTC is fully justified to propose the modifications of Meta's consent decree and to require it to stop profiting from the data it gathers on children and teens. There are three key reasons why. First, due to their developmental vulnerabilities, minors are uniquely harmed by Meta's failure to comply repeatedly with its 2012 and 2020 settlements with the FTC, including its non-compliance with the federal children's privacy law (COPPA); two, because Meta has failed for many years to even comply with the procedural safeguards required by the Commission, it is now time for structural remedies that will make it less likely that Meta can again disregard the terms of the consent decree; and three, the FTC must affirm its credibility and that of the rule of law and ensure that tech giants cannot evade regulation and meaningful accountability."

John Davisson, Director of Litigation, Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC):

"Meta has had two decades to clean up its privacy practices after many FTC warnings, but consistently chose not to. That's not 'tak[ing] the problem seriously,' as Meta claims—that's lawlessness. The FTC was right to take decisive action to protect Meta's most vulnerable users and ban Meta from profiting off kids and teens. It's no surprise to see Meta balk at the legal

consequences of its many privacy violations, but this action is well within the Commission's power to take.”

Haley Hinkle, Policy Counsel, Fairplay:

“Meta has been under the FTC's supervision in this case for over a decade now and has had countless opportunities to put user privacy over profit. The Commission's message that you cannot monetize minors' data if you can't or won't protect them is urgent and necessary in light of these repeated failures to follow the law. Kids and teens are uniquely vulnerable to the harms that result from Meta's failure to run an effective privacy program, and they can't wait for change any longer.”

R.J. Cross, Director of U.S. PIRG's [Don't Sell My Data campaign](#):

“The business model of social media is a recipe for unhappiness. We're all fed content about what we should like and how we should look, conveniently presented alongside products that will fix whatever problem with our lives the algorithm has just helped us discover. That's a hard message to hear day in and day out, especially when you're a teen. We're damaging the self-confidence of some of our most impressionable citizens in the name of shopping. It's absurd. It's time to short circuit the business model.”

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