Discord

September 18, 2024

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
506 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rick Scott
110 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Shaheen, Senator Scott, Senator Manchin, Senator Hirono, Senator Hassan, Senator Cortez Masto, Senator Wyden, Senator King, Senator Blumenthal, Senator Blackburn, Senator Casey, Senator Rubio, Senator Brown, and Senator Grassley,

Thank you for your letter regarding our efforts to combat child sexual abuse material and non-consensual adult intimate media.

Discord's mission is to be the best communication tool for people to hang out and talk together around playing their favorite games. In order to fulfill that mission, we work hard to create a safe, welcoming, and inclusive space online.

Discord has a zero-tolerance policy for content or conduct that endangers or sexualizes children and we do not tolerate the sharing of non-consensual adult intimate media (NCAIM). We are pleased to share information about our service and our approach to fighting child sexual abuse material (CSAM) and NCAIM. We remain ready to discuss this important issue with you and are committed to working with you as well as with those affected, industry peers, and outside experts to identify solutions.

I.   Introduction to Discord

Discord is a global voice, video, and text communications platform. Discord's users interact with the communities they choose to join via "servers," peer-to-peer spaces that enable conversation and sharing. Servers are made up of channels where users communicate by text, voice, and video—a more organized and powerful messaging experience. Text channels allow users to interact via text-based messages, as well as images, GIFs, emojis, and other files. Voice channels allow users to communicate by voice, video, and/or livestream sharing. Users are also able to chat one-on-one through direct messages ("DMs") or in small groups via group direct messages ("GDMs"). Messages are displayed in the order in which they are sent.

We believe that providing online spaces where people can connect authentically with individuals who share their interests improves people's lives. Safety is a top priority and a primary area of investment as a business. That is why more than 15% of Discord employees work on safety.

II.   Discord's approach to combating harmful content and behavior

Discord takes a multi-pronged approach to combating harmful content and behavior. This includes: (a) our "safety by design" practice when developing products; (b) our efforts to enforce our policies and remove harmful content and actors from our service; (c) our work with industry partners and experts; and (d) our cooperation with law enforcement.

a)   Discord's "safety by design" practice

Discord takes a "safety by design" approach to our work—that means a company-wide commitment to building our service safely and to fully integrating safety considerations throughout the product development cycle instead of waiting until after a product is launched. Our process involves risk assessments to identify potential safety risks, including at the product design phase, and mitigating those risks, including via internal safety technology solutions and other methods.

b)   Discord's efforts to fight CSAM and NCAIM

Discord has robust Community Guidelines that contain the rules that everyone must follow on Discord. They apply to all parts of the service.

Discord has a zero-tolerance policy for content or conduct that endangers or sexualizes children. Our Community Guidelines prohibit CSAM, including AI-generated, photorealistic CSAM. We proactively scan images uploaded to our service—no matter the size of the server in which a user seeks to post an image or the number of users participating in the conversation—in order to detect, remove, and report CSAM content and perpetrators to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), which subsequently works with law enforcement to take appropriate action. These proactive measures are deployed in smaller servers and direct messages just as they are deployed in larger group spaces on our service. In addition to our use of industry standard tools to detect and remove known CSAM, Discord invests in developing innovative technologies to proactively identify novel CSAM—images that have not previously been detected and so do not appear in available hash databases. In addition, Discord has a zero-tolerance policy for inappropriate sexual conduct with children, meaning inappropriate sexual contact between adults and teens on the service, with special attention given to predatory behaviors such as online enticement and the sexual extortion of children, commonly referred to as "sextortion."

Discord also does not permit or tolerate the sharing, distribution, taking, or creation of NCAIM, whether it's with a group or one person. Discord's Community Guidelines prohibit NCAIM. Discord's policy prohibiting NCAIM covers media taken or created without an individual's knowledge or consent (for example, hidden cameras, "creepshots", videos of sexual assault, AI-generated sexual images such as "deepfakes"), as well as media that was originally obtained or created with consent (for example, within the context of a private or intimate relationship, sometimes known as "revenge porn" or "image-based sexual abuse"). In order to protect victims and stop the proliferation of NCAIM, we remove confirmed instances of this content. Discord also takes the threat to share or distribute NCAIM seriously and will take appropriate action covered under our Threats Policy. This includes the threat to share NCAIM unless a demand is met.

We enforce our Community Guidelines through a mix of both proactive detection and reactive measures, supported by a range of human-powered and technical solutions. Discord identifies content and servers that violate its policies in four fundamental ways: (1) through proactive moderation by a dedicated team of Discord employees, (2) through user-generated reports, (3) through community moderation, and (4) via a trusted reporter process that allows partners to surface content and reports of violations directly to our Trust & Safety team. Proactive monitoring is overseen by specialist teams trained in investigating and preventing certain types of high harm, including exploitative and child sexual abuse materials, as well as NCAIM.

When we become aware of a violation of our guidelines, we may take a range of enforcement steps, including issuing warnings, removing content, suspending or removing the violative accounts and/or servers, and when appropriate, reporting violations to law enforcement. We also may consider relevant off-platform behavior when assessing violations of specific Community Guidelines. When we become aware of a user engaging in repeated violations or high harms including the distribution of CSAM or NCAIM, we will take swift action to permanently remove that user and the violating content.

c) Discord's work with partners

Discord works closely with industry partners and outside experts to inform and enhance our safety efforts. We develop and share best practices and information with peer companies, non-governmental organizations, academics, and subject matter experts. These organizations include NCMEC, Tech Coalition, Internet Watch Foundation, INHOPE, and the Family Online Safety Institute. As part of our industry-wide efforts within the Tech Coalition, Discord is an original member of the Lantern initiative, a first-of-its-kind signal sharing program for companies to enhance and strengthen how they detect attempts to sexually exploit and abuse children and teens online.

Discord also operates a "Safety Reporting Network," a global partnership of trusted organizations which collaborate directly with Discord's Trust & Safety team. Organizations participating in our Safety Reporting Network identify and report violations of our Community Guidelines. Members

of Discord's Safety Reporting Network have access to a prioritized reporting channel, and, once our Trust & Safety team is made aware of a policy violation, we may take a range of actions, including: removing content, banning users, shutting down servers, and when appropriate, engaging with the proper authorities.

d) Discord's work with law enforcement

Discord [provides law enforcement agencies](#) with necessary information while respecting the privacy and rights of our users. When we receive a request from a law enforcement agency seeking information about a Discord user, we expeditiously review it to ensure legal compliance and its overall validity. Discord may also disclose user data—including proactively—to law enforcement in emergency situations when we possess a good faith belief that there is an imminent risk of serious physical injury or death. Discord also uses information learned from law enforcement to inform its own efforts to fight CSAM and NCAIM.

III. Discord's commitment to continually improve our safety work

Discord is committed to fighting the spread of CSAM and NCAIM online. For example, in addition to using PhotoDNA to proactively scan images uploaded to our service in order to detect, remove, and report CSAM content and perpetrators to NCMEC, Discord uses internally developed tools (including machine learning techniques) and works with industry partners (including peer companies, non-profits, and researchers) to detect CSAM distribution. This includes collaborating with industry peers to further [develop](#) CLIP, a machine learning image detection and identification algorithm, into a specialized version designed to detect unknown and AI-generated CSAM.

We also recently joined a [multistakeholder working group](#) led by the Center for Democracy & Technology (CDT), the Cyber Civil Rights Initiative (CCRI), and the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV). The group is focused on identifying ways to mitigate the harms caused by the creation and spread of NCAIM. As part of this effort, Discord worked with other companies, civil society organizations, and academics to develop a set of [voluntary principles](#) to prevent and address image-based sexual abuse (IBSA).

We are currently in the process of exploring partnerships and ways we might incorporate additional hash databases into our systems. This includes ongoing partnership discussions with StopNCII and NCMEC's Take It Down program to identify ways we can work together and further improve our approach.

At Discord, when implementing additional hash databases, we first work with the partner to ensure the database contains a high percentage of true positives—i.e. hashes that identify actual violative content. This is essential for protecting user privacy, preventing the removal of legitimate

media, and for ensuring that we are not misdirecting important resources away from harmful content and behavior.

Not only do we intend to continue innovating our internal processes and exploring new partnerships in this space, but we will continue sharing and learning about best practices and technologies with industry peers, non-governmental organizations, and researchers. We appreciate the opportunity to share more about our ongoing work to combat CSAM and NCAIM.

 We would be happy to meet with you to discuss further.

Sincerely,

Kate Sheerin
Head of U.S. and Canada Public Policy
Discord Inc.

cc Senator Manchin, Senator Hirono, Senator Hassan, Senator Cortez Masto, Senator Wyden, Senator King, Senator Blumenthal, Senator Blackburn, Senator Casey, Senator Rubio, Senator Brown, and Senator Grassley.