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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON  
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

September 21, 2022

Mr. Parag Agrawal  
Chief Executive Officer  
Twitter, Inc.  
1355 Market St. #900  
San Francisco, CA 94103

Dear Mr. Agrawal:

On September 14, 2022, Jay Sullivan, General Manager of Bluebird at Twitter testified before the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee (HSGAC) about social media's impact on homeland security. In the hearing, Mr. Sullivan testified that Twitter's "COVID misinformation policy only looked at information that was demonstrably and widely believed" to be false.<sup>1</sup> I write to request information and material concerning the development and implementation of those policies.

Dr. Rochelle Walensky, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) testified before a Senate Committee in November, 2021 that the United States has the "most robust vaccine safety system we have ever had in this country."<sup>2</sup> In October 2020, before the vaccines for COVID-19 were approved, CDC's Dr. Tom Shimabukuro said, "VAERS [the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System] is the national passive surveillance or spontaneous reporting system that is co-managed by CDC and FDA. VAERS can rapidly detect safety signals and can detect rare adverse events."<sup>3</sup> He added,

VAERS traditionally has provided the initial data on the safety profile of new vaccines when they are introduced. For COVID, vaccine reports will be processed within one to five business days, depending on the seriousness of the report. CDC and FDA receive updated datasets daily, and data mining runs are planned to be conducted every one to two weeks. So this is an example of the timeliness and responsiveness of VAERS going back to H1N1.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Social Media's Impact on Homeland Security: Hearing Before S. Comm. on Homeland Sec. and Governmental Affairs*, 117th Cong. (2022) (statement of Jay Sullivan, General Manager, Bluebird) *video available at* <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/hearings/social-medias-impact-on-homeland-security>.

<sup>2</sup> *Next Steps: The Road Ahead for the COVID-19 Response: Hearing Before the S. Comm. On Health, Educ., Labor, and Pensions*, 117th Cong. (2021) (statement of Dr. Rochelle Walensky, Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) *video available at* <https://www.help.senate.gov/hearings/next-steps-the-road-ahead-for-the-covid-19-response>.

<sup>3</sup> FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, CENTER FOR BIOLOGICS EVALUATION AND RESEARCH, 161ST VACCINES AND RELATED BIOLOGICAL PRODUCTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING 94 (OCT. 22, 2020), *transcript available at* <https://www.fda.gov/media/143982/download>.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at 95.

Given the fact that our public health officials have highlighted how VAERS could serve as a useful tool in tracking the safety profile of vaccines, I examined and compared government data on the number of adverse events reports associated with COVID-19 vaccines, medications used to treat both COVID-19, and non-COVID-19 medications. I combined the government data and put it into a chart. I tweeted the chart on January 3, 2022.<sup>5</sup> Twitter labeled it “misleading” and blocked all replies, shares, or likes for the tweet.<sup>6</sup> I have reproduced the censored tweet below.

### **Tweet censored by Twitter in January 2022<sup>7</sup>**



**Senator Ron Johnson** @SenRonJ... · 2d

Sadly, we passed two milestones on VAERS. Over 1 million adverse events and over 21,000 deaths. 30% of those deaths occurred on day 0, 1, or 2 following vaccination. When will federal agencies start being transparent with Americans? Why do they continue to ignore early treatment?

	Adverse events	Deaths	Deaths/year
1/1/1996 – 9/30/2021:			
Ivermectin	3,756	393	15
HCQ	23,355	1,770	69
Flu vaccines	197,816	2,001	77
Dexamethasone	83,599	15,910	618
Tylenol	112,244	26,356	1,024
Since 2020:			
Remdesivir	6,504	1,612	921
In 12 months:			
<b>Covid vaccines</b>	<b>1,000,229</b>	<b>21,002</b>	<b>21,002</b>

**Misleading**  
Learn why health officials consider COVID-19 vaccines safe for most people.  
[Find out more](#)

This Tweet can't be replied to, shared, or liked.

I asked Mr. Sullivan why Twitter censored this information. He replied, “I wasn’t at the company at the time, but what I can tell you is that we want robust discussion on the platform of any issue. A COVID misinformation policy was developed that seemed to me, and again I don’t develop it, but it seemed quite narrow to me.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Ron Johnson (@SenRonJohnson), TWITTER (Jan. 5, 2022, 6:33 PM), <https://twitter.com/SenRonJohnson/status/1478863592606867463>.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> *Social Media’s Impact on Homeland Security: Hearing Before the S. Comm. on Homeland Sec. and Governmental Affairs*, 117th Cong. (2022) (statement of Jay Sullivan, General Manager, Bluebird) *video available at* <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/hearings/social-medias-impact-on-homeland-security>.

In light of Mr. Sullivan's inability to articulate why Twitter censored government data from my Twitter account, I request the following information and material:

1. Has Twitter worked with U.S. health authorities in the development of its COVID-19 misinformation policies? If yes, please provide:
  - a. The complete list of U.S. health agencies Twitter worked with on the development of its COVID-19 misinformation policies;
  - b. The names and titles of each official at each of the federal health agencies that Twitter worked with on the development of its COVID-19 misinformation policies; and
  - c. All communications with any employee of a federal health agency referring or relating to the development, implementation, or application, of Twitter's COVID-19 misinformation policies from January 2020 to the present.
2. Mr. Sullivan testified that Twitter's "COVID misinformation policy only looked at information that was demonstrably and widely believed" to be false.<sup>9</sup> Please explain what is "demonstrably" false about my tweet in January 2022 reproducing government data from our public health agencies?
3. Please provide all documents and communications, internal and external of Twitter, referring or relating to Twitter's application of its COVID-19 misinformation policies to my Twitter page.

Thank you for your attention to this important request. Please produce all responsive material by October 5, 2022. I look forward to receiving a prompt and complete response.

Sincerely,



Ron Johnson  
Ranking Member  
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations

cc: The Honorable Jon Ossoff  
Chairman  
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations

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<sup>9</sup> *Social Media's Impact on Homeland Security: Hearing Before the S. Comm. on Homeland Sec. and Governmental Affairs*, 117th Cong. (2022) (statement of Jay Sullivan, General Manager, Bluebird) video available at <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/hearings/social-medias-impact-on-homeland-security>.