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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

March 28, 2023

David Baszucki
Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer
Roblox Corporation
970 Park Place
San Mateo, CA 94403

Dear Mr. Baszucki:

I write to request information regarding Roblox's actions to identify and remove content that broadcasts or promotes terrorism, violent extremism, or hate crimes, as well as any efforts Roblox has made to address the use of its platform by those who perpetrate such acts.

Last May, a gunman committed a horrific and premeditated act of domestic terrorism that killed ten and injured three more at a Tops Friendly Markets in Buffalo, New York. The perpetrator not only livestreamed this act of white supremacist violence against the Black community on the Twitch platform, he also reportedly used a private, invite-only Discord server to detail his plan to attack for months.¹ I subsequently pressed these social media platforms on their roles in promoting extremist content.² It is becoming increasingly clear that extremists are using online games themselves, and not just social media, as instruments to radicalize and recruit; the Buffalo gunman himself noted on his Discord server that "playing Apocalypse Rising on Roblox gave [him] interests in survival and guns" and that he "probably wouldn't be as nationalistic if it weren't for Blood and Iron on roblox [sic]."³

Roblox, like many online games, offers its users the opportunity to do more than play and enjoy a game, but also to create and foster individual and community relationships through the social elements provided. As positive as these attributes can be, for years extremists have exploited the community-building aspects of games to spread propaganda, radicalize and recruit users, and mobilize for terrorist activities. For instance, in 2019, *NBC News* reported on the complaint logged by the mother of a *Roblox* user that alerted Roblox to other user accounts

¹ Jonah E. Bromwich, *Before Massacre Began, Suspect Invited Others to Review His Plan*, N.Y. TIMES (May 17, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/17/nyregion/buffalo-shooting-discord-chat-plans.html?referringSource=articleShare>.

² Press Release, U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Office of the Chair, Durbin Presses Social Media Platforms on their Roles in Promoting Extremist Context (May 19, 2022), <https://www.durbin.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/durbin-presses-social-media-platforms-on-their-roles-in-promoting-extremist-context>.

³ See Ben Goggin (@BenjaminGoggin), TWITTER (May 18, 2022, 12:41 PM), <https://twitter.com/BenjaminGoggin/status/1526966284294012929>.

promoting “#WhitePowerExtremist” and “#DomesticTerrorism” groups.⁴ *NBC News* found over 100 additional user accounts promoting white-supremacist content, including accounts connected to the Proud Boys.⁵ Many of these accounts were soliciting users to connect with the extremists behind them on social media platforms outside of the game.⁶

Unlike many of its industry peers, Roblox appears to be the only online gaming platform that has implemented a specific policy addressing terrorism and violent extremism. This is a welcome development. However, given the complexity of this kind of moderation, and the continued role of Roblox and online games in facilitating the proliferation of violent extremism, it is crucial that Congress better understand what Roblox is doing to address efforts by violent extremists to use its platform to recruit, organize, and amplify violence and threats of violence. For this reason, please respond to the following requests as soon as possible, but no later than April 18, 2023:

1. Please produce Roblox’s community standards from January 1, 2017 to present, including any changes to its terms of service on terrorism and violent extremism, threats/bullying/harassment, discrimination/slurs/hate speech, and harmful off-platform speech or behavior.⁷
2. Please explain in detail, and produce documents sufficient to show, how Roblox identifies content that violates its community standards.
3. Please explain in detail, and produce documents sufficient to show, Roblox’s process for removing content that violates its community standards, including the average time between when such content is posted and when it is removed.
4. Since Roblox implemented policies on terrorism and violent extremism, threats/bullying/harassment, discrimination/slurs/hate speech, and harmful off-platform speech or behavior, please quantify how much content on Roblox has been found to violate each of those policies since January 2020, broken down by month.
5. Please explain in detail, and produce documents sufficient to show, how Roblox enforces compliance with its terms of service, including when content violates policies on terrorism and violent extremism, threats/bullying/harassment, discrimination/slurs/hate speech, and harmful off-platform speech or behavior; the consequences users face for violating terms of service; whether penalties are escalated for repeat offenders; and what steps are taken to prevent users from circumventing penalties, such as banned users simply creating new accounts.

⁴ Cyrus Farivar, *Extremists creep into Roblox, an online game popular with children*, NBC NEWS (Aug. 21, 2019), <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/extremists-creep-roblox-online-game-popular-children-n1045056>.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ As defined by Roblox’s Community Standards. *See Roblox Community Standards*, ROBLOX, <https://en.help.roblox.com/hc/en-us/articles/203313410-Roblox-Community-Standards> (last visited March 27, 2023).

6. Please explain in detail, and produce documents sufficient to show, what efforts, if any, Roblox engages in to identify and disrupt known extremist groups' use of the platform to radicalize and recruit.
7. Please explain in detail, and produce documents sufficient to show, what efforts, if any, Roblox engages to identify, monitor, and disrupt emerging extremist networks on the platform.
8. Please provide, and produce documents sufficient to show, what percentage of Roblox's yearly budget supports efforts to identify violations of and enforce compliance with the Roblox community standards.
9. Please provide, and produce documents sufficient to show, how many employees and/or contractors have roles where identifying violations of and enforcing compliance with the Roblox community standards is their primary responsibility.
10. Please explain in detail, and produce documents sufficient to show, how those employees and/or contractors who identify violations of, and enforce compliance with, the Roblox community standards fit into the overall Roblox organizational structure, and what role, if any, these employees and/or contractors play in the development of new products.
11. Please describe in detail, and produce documents sufficient to show, Roblox's guidelines and parameters for recommending content to users, including both the curation of search results and targeted promotions based on user data.
12. Please describe in detail any actions planned, in progress, or completed by Roblox to detect and prevent the use of the platform for broadcasting or promoting domestic terrorism and violent extremism.
13. Please describe in detail any actions planned, in progress, or completed by Roblox to coordinate with federal, state, local, and tribal governments and agencies to detect, prevent, or investigate violence or threats, including domestic terrorism and violent extremism.
14. Please describe in detail, and produce documents sufficient to show, what efforts Roblox engages in internally, or allows externally, to systematically analyze the use of its platform by extremists to radicalize and recruit.
15. Please describe in detail, and produce documents sufficient to show, any industry efforts Roblox is engaged in regarding the development of best practices or industry standards concerning the use of online gaming platforms by extremists to radicalize and recruit.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dick Durbin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Richard J. Durbin
Chair

cc: The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Ranking Member