

VICTIM OF FACEBOOK-FACILITATED CHILD EXPLOITATION TO SPEAK AT FACEBOOK ANNUAL MEETING

Survivor Comments to Support Resolution Backed by 43% of Non-Management Shares in 2020; Chief Concerns: Lack of Action to Curb Child Abuse and Exploitation Fueled by Facebook, the “Online Hub” of Child Predators.

NEW YORK – May 24, 2021 – When Facebook management and shareholders consider proxy resolutions at the online giant’s annual meeting on Wednesday (May 26, 2021), they will hear from Sarah Cooper, who was approached as a teenager through Facebook Messenger, met a predator in Boston and New York City, and was sold into sex slavery.

Ms. Cooper will be speaking in favor of [Proposal 6 at the Facebook annual meeting](#), which calls on Facebook to conduct a study of its central role in online child abuse and “assessing the risk of increased sexual exploitation of children as the Company develops and offers additional privacy tools such as end-to-end encryption.” The resolution was filed by Proxy Impact, Lisette Cooper, the Maryknoll Sisters, the Dominican Sisters of Caldwell, NJ, and the Stardust Fund.

In 2020, the same resolution attracted the support of [43 percent of non-management](#) shares of the company that is tightly controlled by Mark Zuckerberg.

How bad is [the child abuse and exploitation problem at Facebook](#)? And how much worse could it get?

- Reports of child sexual exploitation in 2020 rose 28 percent from 2019 levels. Last year, there were a total of 21.7 million reports, involving more than 65.4 million images, videos and other files containing suspected child sexual abuse materials (CSAM). Facebook is [the United States’ #1 hub of reported child sexual abuse material](#), accounting for [an estimated 94 percent of the total](#).
- Facebook’s planned encryption has been harshly criticized by government and law enforcement agencies and child protection organizations. Alarmed by the unstemmed rise of child abuse and exploitation, [the United Kingdom has mounted an effort to bar more end-to-end encryption](#) at Facebook. New steps contemplated by Facebook – such as [“Instagram for kids” -- has been sharply criticized](#), since it could create a virtual “fenced-in hunting ground” to be exploited by child predators.
- As is noted in the proxy resolution up for consideration next Wednesday, Facebook is about to make the problem of child sexual abuse material even worse. By moving to end-to-end encryption without first taking steps to stop child sexual abuse on its platforms, Facebook [could effectively make invisible 70 percent of CSAM cases – an estimated 12 million instances – that are currently being detected and reported](#). Earlier this year, [a Facebook official testifying before a UK House of Commons committee admitted that end-to-end encryption will make it harder to track evidence of child sexual abuse and exploitation](#).

In her statement to Facebook shareholders, Sarah Cooper, a survivor of child sexual abuse on Facebook, plans to say this: **“As a teenager social media was my outlet. I used Facebook, Instagram, and Facebook Messenger. At one point I accepted a friend request from a stranger on Facebook. We communicated mostly through Messenger. At first he was nice and friendly trying to learn more about me and my interests. I was so young and I**

was flattered by his seemingly undivided attention. He actively discouraged me from communicating with anyone besides him. At the time I did not recognize this as grooming behavior. I willingly exchanged sexually explicit photos with him at his request, because at the time, being accepted by him, by someone, was important to me. At some point our relationship advanced to talking on the phone and eventually meeting in person.”

Cooper continued: “I met him in Boston and eventually went with him to NY where I was trapped in a motel room that was guarded by armed men. I was sold into sex slavery. When I asked where all the money was going or begged to leave, they gave me alcohol and drugs. I was in a daze but eventually was able to communicate with a friend back in MA who rescued me. I share this in hopes that my story doesn’t become one that you hear from a friend, sister, or mother because no child deserves to be victimized.”

Lisette Cooper, vice-chair, Fiduciary Trust International, former CEO, Athena Capital Advisors, and the mother of Sarah Cooper, said: **“My family has lived through tragedy that no child and no family should have to suffer. The fact that Facebook is facilitating these abuses is bad enough, but to go even farther and make things worse through end-to-end encryption is just totally unacceptable. As parents, this issue of child sexual abuse online, resonates for many of us and we feel it’s time to raise our voices for change, to make the world a safer place for children, while also making the companies we invest in stronger for the future. Facebook has a responsibility to ensure the safety of the environment that our kids are hanging out in on their social media platforms -- ensuring that it’s a safe neighborhood.”**

Michael Passoff, founder and CEO, Proxy Impact, a shareholder advocacy and proxy voting service, said: **“Shareholders are legitimately concerned that Facebook’s role as a facilitator of child abuse and exploitation will spiral even further out of control if it adopts end-to-end encryption without first stopping predators who prey on children. Not only is it the right thing to do, but it is in the best interests of the company which may otherwise face legislative, regulatory, legal, advertising and consumer backlashes.”**

ABOUT PROXY IMPACT

Proxy Impact provides shareholder engagement and proxy voting services that promote sustainable and responsible business practices. www.proxyimpact.com

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