

SURVIVOR OF FACEBOOK-FACILITATED CHILD PREDATOR ABUSE TELLS SHAREHOLDERS TO “DELAY END-TO-END ENCRYPTION” UNTIL PLATFORM CAN ADEQUATELY PROTECT CHILDREN

Searing Testimony Shows Danger Facebook Poses to Young Children and How Ill-Conceived Steps Justified on Privacy Grounds Would Only Hurt More Children.

NEW YORK – May 26, 2021 – A survivor of child abuse and exploitation who was approached on a Facebook platform urged shareholders today at the company’s annual meeting to delay plans to move ahead with end-to-end encryption that would see Facebook “become one of the world’s most dangerous ‘playgrounds’ for children.”

That warning was delivered today by 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.

The following is Sarah Cooper’s full statement:

“My name is Sarah Cooper and I am a member of the Survivor’s Council of ECPAT-USA, the leading anti-child trafficking organization in the United States.

I am here this morning to present resolution #6 asking the Board to report on the risk of increased sexual exploitation of children as the Company develops and offers additional privacy tools such as end-to-end encryption.

One year ago, I told my personal story publicly for the first time, of being groomed and trafficked by a predator that I met on Facebook. He seemed to be my age, but was actually decades older. I was groomed starting when I was 15 until just after my 18th birthday. It seemed innocent enough at the beginning. I received a Facebook friend request from someone I didn’t know.

We exchanged messages back and forth and after some time I sent photos to my predator, then more images to him. He groomed me for over two years. I thought he was a friend, someone I could trust. I didn’t really know anything was wrong until I met him in person, and saw his face, I finally realized he was closer to 40 than 18. Once I stepped into his car it was too late... When I was trafficked, given drugs, sold into sex slavery and held against my will at gunpoint... my instinct was to survive. I was lucky enough to have been rescued by a friend and thankfully survived my ordeal, some are not as lucky and never make it home.

For years, I was unaware of the dangers lurking on the internet, until I myself became a target. Today, as an advocate working to prevent child sex trafficking, I’ve come to understand that law enforcement in the field relies extensively on tips from Facebook to bring predators to justice. But what will happen when you go to end to end encryption on the Messenger app?

Facebook admitted that in going forward with implementing end-to-end encryption it will not be able to see child sexual abuse materials online, and the number of these reports will go down. Therefore, the number of children’s lives that could be saved or helped, will be less.

Facebook made nearly 21 million reports of child sexual materials last year, and it has been estimated that 75% of these will become invisible once it applies end-to end encryption.

Those reports are not just ‘reports’ – they are children. Children who are scared and hurt, children who need our help, children who believe Facebook would never hurt them. They are someone’s daughter, sister, grandchild and neighbor.

Facebook needs to immediately improve age verification, increase human monitoring of content, work in tighter cooperation with law enforcement – and it should absolutely delay expanding encryption on its platforms until it can protect children.

Privacy is important, but we need a balance of privacy and protection of the most vulnerable members of society, our children.

Facebook is a great platform, but it is not a safe platform. And with encryption it will become one of the world's most dangerous 'playgrounds' for children.

Thank you.”

Ms. Cooper spoke 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](#).

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