

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 29, 2022

## VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Merrick Garland  
Attorney General  
Department of Justice

The Honorable Christopher Wray  
Director  
Federal Bureau of Investigation

Dear Attorney General Garland and Director Wray:

Last week, Mark Zuckerberg provided additional details about the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) efforts to proactively reach out to Facebook during the 2020 presidential election to warn the company that there was "about to be" a "Russian propaganda" effort, and that the eventual Hunter Biden laptop reporting "basically fit the pattern" described by the FBI's warning.<sup>1</sup> According to Mr. Zuckerberg, apparently as a result of the FBI's warning, for "5-7 days" after the reporting relating to Hunter Biden and his laptop, Facebook intentionally decreased the distribution of the reporting and limited the amount of people who could review the reports by a "meaningful" volume.<sup>2</sup> Facebook wasn't the only social media company that wrongfully suppressed Hunter Biden reporting; Twitter suspended the *New York Post's* account because of its Hunter Biden reporting and blocked users from sharing the link to the Post's articles relating to the laptop.<sup>3</sup> Then-Director of National Intelligence, John Ratcliffe, stated in October 2020 that the Hunter Biden laptop was not part of a Russian disinformation campaign.<sup>4</sup> As you are aware, even liberal news outlets have now confirmed the authenticity of thousands of records on the Hunter Biden laptop.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Barrabi, *Mark Zuckerberg tells Joe Rogan Facebook was wrong to ban The Post's Hunter Biden laptop story*, N. Y. POST (Aug. 25, 2022), <https://nypost.com/2022/08/25/mark-zuckerberg-criticizes-twiters-handling-of-the-posts-hunter-biden-laptop-story/>; see also Alexander Hall & Alexa Moutevelis, *FBI blasted after Zuckerberg revealed their warning ahead of the Hunter Biden laptop story: 'Collusion'*, FOX NEWS (Aug. 26, 2022), <https://www.foxnews.com/media/fbi-blasted-after-zuckerberg-revealed-warning-ahead-hunter-biden-laptop-story-collusion>.

<sup>2</sup> #1863 – Mark Zuckerberg, THE JOE ROGAN EXPERIENCE (Aug. 25, 2022) (accessed online), <https://open.spotify.com/episode/51gxrAActH18RGhKNza598>; When asked whether the FBI specifically told Facebook to be "on guard" about articles on Hunter Biden's laptop, Mr. Zuckerberg responded, "I don't remember if it was that specifically." *Id.* at 1:49:50 – 1:49:55; 1:47:38 – 1:51:02.

<sup>3</sup>Noah Manskar, *Twitter, Facebook censor Post over Hunter Biden exposé*, N. Y. POST (Oct. 14, 2020), <https://nypost.com/2020/10/14/facebook-twitter-block-the-post-from-posting/>.

<sup>4</sup>Mark Moore, *DNI John Ratcliffe says info on Hunter Biden laptop isn't Russian disinformation*, N. Y. POST (Oct. 19, 2020), <https://nypost.com/2020/10/19/john-ratcliffe-info-on-hunter-biden-laptop-not-russian-disinformation/>.

<sup>5</sup>Katie Benner, Kenneth P. Vogel & Michael S. Schmidt, *Hunter Biden Paid Tax Bill, but Broad Federal Investigation Continues*, N. Y. TIMES (Mar. 16, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/16/us/politics/hunter->

The FBI's consistent efforts to falsely paint information relating to Biden family misconduct as Russian disinformation continues to draw serious concerns, and those concerns are magnified by the FBI's consistent failure to answer congressional inquiries. As our August 25, 2022, letter made clear, in August 2020 the FBI provided an unnecessary and unsolicited briefing that was used by our Democratic colleagues to falsely paint our Biden investigation as advancing Russian disinformation.<sup>6</sup> Our investigation was based on Obama/Biden administration records and included transcribed interviews of witnesses who were once employees of that administration. The FBI's ill-conceived actions not only interfered in our congressional investigation by frustrating and obstructing our ability to advance the matters under review, it also interfered in the 2020 election.

In addition, whistleblowers have recently alleged to Senator Grassley that in August 2020, FBI officials initiated a scheme to downplay derogatory information on Hunter Biden for the purpose of shutting down investigative activity relating to his potential criminal exposure by labeling it "disinformation."<sup>7</sup> Whistleblowers have also alleged to Senator Johnson that local FBI leadership instructed employees not to look at the Hunter Biden laptop immediately after the FBI had obtained it.<sup>8</sup> The American people deserve to know whether the FBI used Facebook or other social media companies as part of their alleged plan to discredit information about Hunter Biden.

Accordingly, please provide the following no later than September 12, 2022:

1. All records relating to the Justice Department's and FBI's contact with Facebook, Twitter, and other social media companies relating to the Biden family, Senator Grassley's and Senator Johnson's Biden investigation, Hunter Biden's laptop, and Russian disinformation from July 1, 2020, to July 1, 2021.
2. The names of the Justice Department and FBI officials who communicated with Facebook, Twitter, and other social media companies regarding Russian disinformation during the 2020 election.
3. The names of the Facebook officials who the Justice Department and FBI made contact with during the 2020 election.

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[biden-tax-bill-investigation.html](#); see also Craig Timberg, Matt Viser & Tom Hamburger, *Here's how The Post analyzed Hunter Biden's laptop*, WASH. POST (Mar. 30, 2022), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/03/30/hunter-biden-laptop-data-examined/>.

<sup>6</sup> Press Release, Grassley, Johnson Call on FBI to Explain Interference in Hunter Biden Investigation (Aug. 26, 2022), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/grassley-johnson-call-on-fbi-to-explain-interference-in-hunter-biden-investigation>.

<sup>7</sup> Press Release, Sen. Charles E. Grassley, Whistleblowers' Reports Reveal Double Standard In Pursuit of Politically Charged Investigations By Senior FBI, DOJ Officials (July 25, 2022), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/whistleblowers-reports-reveal-double-standard-in-pursuit-ofpolitically-charged-investigations-by-senior-fbi-doj-officials>.

<sup>8</sup> Letter from Sen. Ron Johnson, U.S. Senate, to Inspector Gen. Michael Horowitz, Dep't. of Justice, (Aug. 23, 2022), <https://www.ronjohnson.senate.gov/services/files/7CD44E16-BF0B-495E-8B87-900467F69E50>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chuck Grassley". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Charles E. Grassley  
Ranking Member  
Committee on the Judiciary

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ron Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ron Johnson  
Ranking Member  
Permanent Subcommittee  
on Investigations

cc: The Honorable Richard Durbin  
Chairman  
Committee on the Judiciary

The Honorable Jon Ossoff  
Chairman  
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations

The Honorable Michael Horowitz  
Inspector General  
Department of Justice