

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 6, 2020

Mark Zuckerberg
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Facebook, Inc.
1 Hacker Way
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Sheryl Sandberg
Chief Operating Officer
Facebook, Inc.
1 Hacker Way
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Dear Mr. Zuckerberg and Ms. Sandberg,

As you know, women in public life make our democracies stronger, more representative and equitable. In fact, the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that countries and localities led by women leaders tend to fare better in their outcomes. Unfortunately, women in politics face pervasive sexism, hate, harassment, and threats of violence on your platform that make it more difficult for them to succeed in public life. We are imploring Facebook to do more to protect the ability of women to engage in democratic discourse and to foster a safe and empowering space for women.

According to a study by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, "... social media have become the number one place in which psychological violence – particularly in the form of sexist and misogynistic remarks, humiliating images, mobbing, intimidation and threats – is perpetrated against women parliamentarians." In fact, nearly 42 percent of women parliamentarians reported seeing extremely humiliating or sexually charged images of themselves spread through social media. Another recent study determined that in the United States, women elected officials were attacked more often than their male counterparts by fake news accounts, and that these attacks were more likely to be focused on personal traits or character.¹ For example, one sitting female Senator was attacked for not being authentically black or American.

¹ Lucina DiMeco, #ShePersisted: Women, Politics & Power in the New Media World, the Wilson Center, 2019.
<https://www.she-persisted.org/>

