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**BRINDISI TO JOIN FAMILY OF BIANCA DEVINS
TO ANNOUNCE MAJOR PUSH TO COMBAT
VIOLENT & GRAPHIC CONTENT ACROSS
SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS LIKE FACEBOOK
& INSTAGRAM**

Standing With The Family Of Bianca Devins, Whose Tragic Murder Was Shared Across Social Media, Shocking The Nation, Congressman Calls For Major Reforms To Prevent This From Happening Again

Brindisi Has Already Huddled With Facebook/Instagram And Says Social Media Giants Must Do More To Update Moderation Policies, Algorithms And More

Brindisi: Enough Is Enough; Newsfeeds Cannot Play Host To A Crime Scene, Congress Must Step In;

Congressman Anthony Brindisi (NY-22) joined family members of recently slain Upstate New York resident, 17-year-old Bianca Devins, and outlined his plan for more oversight of graphic content on social media.

Following Bianca's tragic death and the harrowing aftermath of harassment of her family, Brindisi called on Instagram and the Federal Trade Commission to step-up their policing of graphic content on social media.

"Bianca's murder and the abuse suffered by her family at the hands of social media bullies is unacceptable," **Brindisi said**. "No family should have to go through this kind of abuse after losing a loved one. Instagram, and social media companies at large, need to be more vigilant and police graphic content on their platforms. There needs to be more accountability and if these companies cannot deliver, the Federal Trade Commission needs to find a way to prevent this from happening."

With roughly seven-in-ten Americans using social media, the platforms are critical to the lives of nearly every American. With more than 2 billion users worldwide and record profits Facebook, Instagram's parent company, continues to be a giant in social media.

Brindisi, no stranger to taking on large media companies, called on Instagram to re-evaluate their graphic content policies and enforcement. Instagram currently employs 15,000 individuals to police more than 1 billion monthly users.

Brindisi called on the FTC to launch an investigation of this matter and provide plans to the public to ensure families like the Devins are not subject to harassment like this in the future.

Brindisi sent letters to the FTC and to Instagram. These letters can be read below.

August 7, 2019

*The Honorable Joseph J. Simons, Chairman
The Honorable Noah Phillips, Commissioner
The Honorable Rohit Chopra, Commissioner
The Honorable Rebecca Slaughter, Commissioner
The Honorable Christine Wilson, Commissioner
Federal Trade Commission
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20580*

Dear Chairman Simons, Commissioner Phillips, Commissioner Chopra, Commissioner Slaughter, and Commissioner Wilson:

I write to bring your attention to a hometown tragedy and to urge immediate and accountable federal action as it relates to the murder of one of my constituents, seventeen-year-old Bianca Devins of Utica, New York.

Bianca was murdered on Sunday, July 14, 2019. The alleged perpetrator then posted extremely graphic and disturbing images of the crime on Instagram, as well as other social media platforms. These images remained visible for more than a week. Users report that when they attempted to flag the images as violating the platform's Community Guidelines (Instagram) or Community Standards (Facebook), they received messages that the content could remain up with a sensitive content warning, or that the images did not violate Instagram's Community Guidelines at all. This is unacceptable.

I have been in communication with the platforms and have heard about the mitigation steps they took to try and remove these images. I appreciate the work they are doing on a voluntary basis, but we simply must do better. These companies reach tens of millions of daily users in the United States, and they have a responsibility to prevent this kind of extremely graphic and disturbing content from ever making its way to consumers.

I am encouraging the FTC to use its authority under section 6(b) of the FTC Act to open a special probe into this case and the sensitive content practices of large social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. Section 6(b) allows the FTC to produce "special reports" with the goal of protecting consumers. Bianca's family is clear: they do not want another family to ever have to experience what they have gone through these past few weeks. Only through a full accounting of what happened in this case can we make sure it does not happen again. I firmly believe an outside, transparent, and accountable investigation is needed in order to determine full compliance with the law. The FTC should then share the results with the public. With seven-in-ten Americans using social media today, there is no doubt that this type of investigation serves the public interest.

Thank you for your urgent attention to this matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Anthony Brindisi

Member of Congress

August 7, 2019

Adam Mosseri

CEO

Instagram

1601 Willow Road

Menlo Park, CA 94025

Mr. Mosseri:

I write on behalf of my community and the family of seventeen-year-old Bianca Devins of Utica, New York. As you are aware, Bianca was murdered on Sunday, July 14, 2019. The alleged perpetrator then posted extremely graphic and disturbing images of the crime on your platform, as well as others, images that remained visible for more than a week.

The pain of losing a child is unimaginable. But to have that pain exploited, mocked, and shared on social media is a trauma that no family should ever have to go through. I have heard heartbreaking stories of these graphic images being sent directly to Bianca's family members, including children. This type of harassment is not something we can abide. These images reportedly appeared more than a week later on Instagram's parent company, Facebook. Further, users report that when they attempted to flag the images as violating the Community Guidelines (Instagram) or Community Standards (Facebook), they received messages that the content could remain up with a sensitive content warning, or that the images did not violate Instagram's Community Guidelines at all. This is unacceptable.

I appreciate the work your staff has done to update my office and Bianca's family, and the actions you have taken so far to try to remove these horrific images from your platform. However, I believe more needs to be done. I am especially concerned about the training and manpower of your company's content reviewers. Employing 15,000 individuals to ensure community compliance across 1 billion monthly users does not strike me as adequate, and clearly in this case it was not enough. I am aware your company also relies on software to ensure compliance. However, as we have seen, users will find numerous ways to manipulate and distort images to circumvent your software. Human moderators in many ways are the last line of defense, but if they are not adequately trained or not able to keep up with the workload, these tragedies will continue to occur.

There also must be accountability for Instagram users who violate your company's Community Guidelines in such a despicable way. I am seeking your commitment to permanently ban users who share these images, and to the best of your ability to restrict these users' IPs from accessing the app under a different username. I also need your assurance that Instagram will fully comply with local law enforcement should these users be prosecuted for aggravated harassment or other related crimes.

Finally, in order to obtain a full accounting and to protect other families from this kind of abuse, I am calling on your company to conduct an independent audit of this incident by a third party. This audit should include a timeline of the average response time to remove these photos, and a timeline of how long they appeared on the platform. Bianca's family is clear: they do not want another family to ever have to experience what they have gone through these past few weeks. Only through a full accounting of what happened in this case can we make sure it does not

happen again. Once this audit is complete, I would ask that you share the results with Bianca's family and my office.

Americans cannot stand to see another senseless tragedy uploaded to this platform, and we owe it to Bianca, her family and my community to fight for answers and action. Thank you for your urgent attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Anthony Brindisi

Member of Congress