

Attorney General Raoul Seeks Answers From Facebook On Program That Promotes COVID-19 Disinformation

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CHICAGO – Attorney General Kwame Raoul today joined a coalition of 14 attorneys general urging Facebook to disclose whether individuals who spread falsehoods and mislead Americans about the safety of the coronavirus vaccines – the so-called “Disinformation Dozen” – were granted “XCheck” protections to evade enforcement and spread COVID-19 falsehoods and anti-vaccine disinformation in violation of Facebook rules.

Internal Facebook documents shared by whistleblower Frances Haugen revealed that Facebook maintains a whitelist of users under the project name “XCheck” that allows

millions of celebrities, politicians, and journalists to share content in violation of Facebook rules. Documents showed those posts contained harassment, incitement of violence, and disinformation regarding vaccinations and COVID-19.

“The disinformation shared on Facebook is incredibly dangerous. It is disturbing that Facebook allows elite users to violate the platform’s rules and share false information related to the COVID-19 pandemic,” Raoul said. “I urge Facebook to disclose which users were allowed to spread disinformation and to take steps to eliminate harmful disinformation on its platform.”

In the letter to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, Raoul and the coalition urge Facebook to disclose whether any members of the Disinformation Dozen have received XCheck whitelist protection. Raoul and the coalition also ask Facebook to disclose the extent to which whitelisted content has been deemed to be anti-vaccine, and how many user complaints regarding such anti-vaccine posts have resulted in the removal of the content.

Despite efforts Facebook has taken to address some elements of vaccine disinformation, evidence is clear that Facebook’s algorithm has promoted anti-vaccine content and that those who have chosen not to be vaccinated have been influenced by false or misleading information shared on Facebook.

Joining Raoul in sending the letter are the attorneys general of Connecticut, California, Delaware, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Virginia.