

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

November 22, 2022

Mr. Sundar Pichai  
Chief Executive Officer  
Alphabet Inc.  
1600 Amphitheatre Parkway  
Mountain View, CA 94043

Dear Mr. Pichai,

We write today regarding the responsibility that Google has to ensure users receive accurate information when searching for abortion services on your platform. We are encouraged by and appreciative of the recent steps Google has taken to protect those searching for abortion services from being mistakenly directed to clinics that do not offer comprehensive reproductive health services. However, we ask you to address issues with misrepresentation in advertising on Google's site and take a more expansive, proactive approach to addressing violations of Google's stated policy.

On June 17, 2022, we wrote to you, along with 19 other senators and representatives, regarding research that showed Google results for searches such as "abortion services near me" often included links to clinics that are anti-abortion, sometimes called "crisis pregnancy centers."<sup>1</sup> We were extremely concerned with this practice of directing users toward "crisis pregnancy centers" without any disclaimer indicating those businesses do not provide abortions.

We were pleased to see the changes you have made in response to our letter, such as the new refinement tool that allows users to only see facilities verified to offer abortion services, while still preserving the option to see a broader range of search results.<sup>2</sup> The steps you have taken will help prevent users from mistakenly being sent to organizations that attempt to deceive individuals into thinking they provide comprehensive health services and instead, regularly provide users with disinformation regarding the risks of abortion.<sup>3</sup> As many states are increasingly narrowing the window between getting a positive pregnancy test and when you can terminate a pregnancy, every day counts.

But we find ourselves again asking that Google live up to its promises with regards to preventing misleading ads on its platform. According to an investigation by Bloomberg News and the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://counterhate.com/blog/anti-abortion-fake-clinics/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://techcrunch.com/2022/08/25/google-search-and-maps-will-now-clearly-label-if-a-healthcare-facility-provides-abortions/>

<sup>3</sup> See: <https://www.ncrp.org/news/new-research-crisis-pregnancy-centers-hold-a-51-funding-advantage-over-legitimate-abortion-clinics-and-funds-nationwide>; <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11606-018-4703-4>; <https://journalofethics.ama-assn.org/article/why-crisis-pregnancy-centers-are-legal-unethical/2018-03>; and <https://www.guttmacher.org/journals/psrh/2012/09/public-health-risks-crisis-pregnancy-centers>

Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH), depending on the search term used, Google does not consistently apply disclaimer labels to ads by anti-abortion clinics.<sup>4</sup> CCDH recently conducted searches that returned 132 misleading ads for such clinics that lacked disclaimers. Specifically, researchers found that queries for terms such as “Plan C pills,” “pregnancy help,” and “Planned Parenthood” often returned results with ads that are not labeled accurately.<sup>5</sup> We believe Google’s failure to apply disclaimer labels to these common searches appears to be a violation of your June 2019 policy that requires “advertisers who want to run ads using keywords related to getting an abortion” to go through a verification process and be labeled as a provider that “Provides abortions” or “Does not provide abortions.”<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, the Tech Transparency Project found that some ads from “crisis pregnancy centers,” even when they were properly labeled, the ads themselves included deliberately deceptive verbiage aimed at tricking users into believing that they offer abortion services.<sup>7</sup> For example, ads for “crisis pregnancy centers” were found to contain language such as “Free Abortion Pill” and “First Trimester Abortion.” Such deceptive advertising likely reduces the effectiveness of labels and may lead to detrimental health outcomes for users who receive delayed treatment. These ads appear to violate Google’s policy on misrepresentation, which prohibits ads that “deceive users.”<sup>8</sup> Your responsiveness to our first letter gives us hope that you are willing to see this issue through. We, therefore, would appreciate answers to the following questions:

1. What specific search terms does Google consider related to “getting an abortion”?
2. What criteria does Google use to determine whether specific queries are related to “getting an abortion”?
3. What additional steps will Google take to identify and remove ads with misleading verbiage that violates Google’s policies against misrepresentation?

We urge you to take proactive action to rectify these and any additional issues surrounding misleading ads, and help ensure users receive search results that accurately address their queries and are relevant to their intentions.

Thanks for your consideration, and we look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator



Elissa Slotkin  
Member of Congress

<sup>4</sup> <https://counterhate.com/blog/google-still-failing-to-label-fake-clinic-ads-targeting-users-searching-for-abortion-services/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2022-google-search-abortion-clinic-crisis-pregnancy-center-ads>

<sup>6</sup> <https://support.google.com/adspolicy/answer/9297839>

<sup>7</sup> <https://twitter.com/daveyalba/status/1575542676891398146?s=20&t=7CEE6J0kUR-N-sSt4Cbk6g>

<sup>8</sup> <https://support.google.com/adspolicy/answer/6020955>