

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

05/18/2022

The Honorable Chris Murphy  
Chairman, Subcommittee on  
Homeland Security  
128 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on  
Homeland Security  
135 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Murphy and Ranking Member Capito:

We write to express our strong opposition to the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Disinformation Governance Board and urge that any funding for such a board be prohibited in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Homeland Security appropriations bill, including but not limited to the prohibition of funds for detailed staff. Additionally, we urge that no funds allocated to any of DHS's offices or components be used to support the Board or any functions of the board. The federal government should never be in the business of regulating speech or being the arbiter of truth, and this latest attempt to engage in that slippery slope should be defunded.

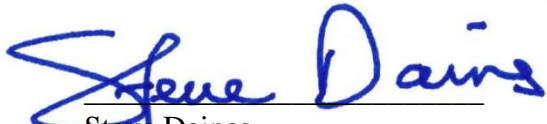
The existence of the board was first brought to light during congressional hearings in April, but we now know it has been in existence for several months – without having one documented meeting. While DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas testified that the board will not be used for political purposes and did his best to explain away serious concerns raised, little remains known as to what the board will actually do, how it will determine what is disinformation, and the scope in which it will take to monitor disinformation from American citizens. It is known, however, that the board's executive director, Nina Jankowicz, is a hyper-partisan actor whose opinions of free speech and of those she disagrees with are well documented. It is also known that the board currently lacks any guiding policy, mission statement, or charter. Absent of these necessary guardrails to prevent mission creep, there is substantial risk of government overreach and First Amendment infringements. Although recent reports indicate that the board's operations have been "paused", Ms. Jankowicz has resigned, and its dissolution is being considered by DHS, its future remains as unclear as its mission.


The federal government already has authorities to counter foreign disinformation and propaganda through the Department of State's Global Engagement Center. Additionally, DHS's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) is responsible for informing Americans about disinformation related to elections and critical infrastructure. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is the lead agency in the Foreign Influence Task Force. There is no gap in our nation's ability to counter disinformation threats that this board fills.


While DHS has promised the board will "protect privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties," we do not take solace in words alone. A fine line exists between tackling disinformation and government censorship. Exactly where the Disinformation Governance Board falls on this line


remains unclear and the potential for abuse is so egregious that we urge any and all funding for the board be prohibited during the Homeland Security appropriations process.

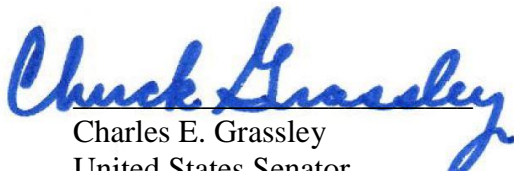
Sincerely,


  
Steve Daines  
United States Senator

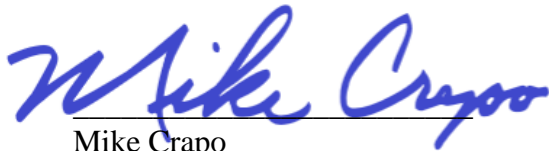
  
Roger Marshall, M.D.  
United States Senator

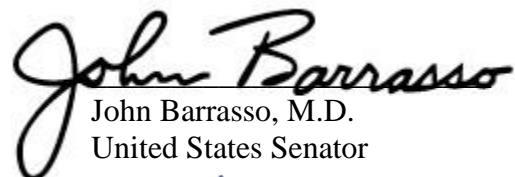
  
James E. Risch  
United States Senator


  
Todd Young  
United States Senator

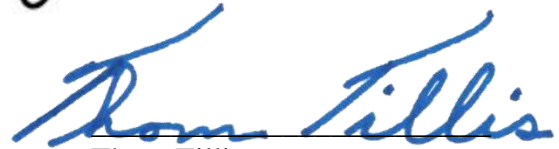
  
Charles E. Grassley  
United States Senator

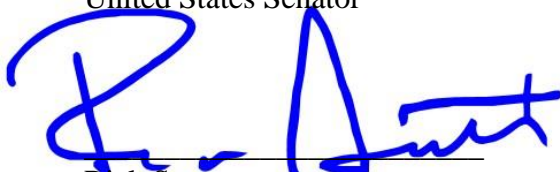
  
Michael S. Lee  
United States Senator

  
Mike Crapo  
United States Senator

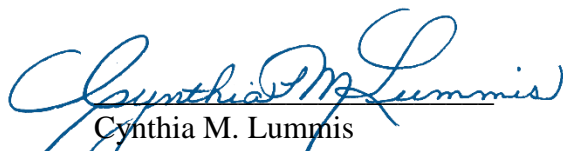
  
John Barrasso, M.D.  
United States Senator

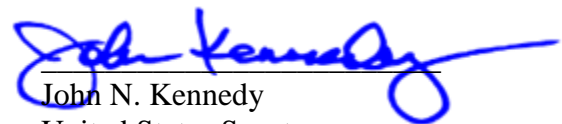
  
Kevin Cramer  
United States Senator


  
Thom Tillis  
United States Senator

  
Rick Scott  
United States Senator

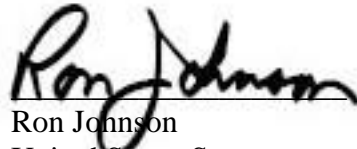
  
James Lankford  
United States Senator

  
Cynthia M. Lummis  
United States Senator

  
John N. Kennedy  
United States Senator



John Hoeven  
United States Senator



Ron Johnson  
United States Senator



Mitt Romney  
United States Senator



Rob Portman  
United States Senator