

March 21, 2023

Mr. Sam Altman  
Chief Executive Officer  
OpenAI  
3180 18th Street Suite 100  
San Francisco, CA 94110

Mr. Sundar Pichai  
Chief Executive Officer  
Alphabet Inc. and Google LLC  
1600 Amphitheatre Parkway  
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Mr. Mark Zuckerberg  
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer  
Meta  
1 Hacker Way  
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Mr. Evan Spiegel  
Chief Executive Officer  
Snap  
2772 Donald Douglas Loop North  
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Mr. Satya Nadella  
Chief Executive Officer  
Microsoft  
One Microsoft Way  
Redmond, WA 98052

Dear Mr. Altman, Mr. Spiegel, Mr. Pichai, Mr. Nadella, and Mr. Zuckerberg:

I write with concerns about the rapid integration of generative artificial intelligence (AI) into search engines, social media platforms, and other consumer products heavily used by teenagers and children. Although generative AI has enormous potential, the race to integrate it into everyday applications cannot come at the expense of younger users' safety and wellbeing.

In November 2022, OpenAI launched ChatGPT, a generative AI chatbot that responds to user inquiries and requests.<sup>1</sup> After ChatGPT's introduction, leading digital platforms have rushed to integrate generative AI technologies into their applications and services. On February 7, 2023, Microsoft released an AI-powered version of its Bing search engine.<sup>2</sup> Alphabet announced a competing conversational AI service called Bard, which it plans to make widely available to the

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<sup>1</sup> OpenAI, "[Introducing ChatGPT](#)," November 30, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Yusuf Mehdi, "[Reinventing search with a new AI-powered Microsoft Bing and Edge, your copilot for the web](#)," Microsoft, February 7, 2023; Yusuf Mehdi, "[Confirmed: the new Bing runs on OpenAI's GPT-4](#)," Microsoft, March 14, 2023.

public “within weeks.”<sup>3</sup> Reportedly, Alphabet’s senior management also plans to integrate generative AI into all of its products with over a billion users in the coming months.<sup>4</sup>

Social media platforms have also moved quickly to harness generative AI. On February 27, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg described how the company planned to “turbocharge” its work on generative AI by “developing AI personas” and exploring how to integrate AI into “experiences with text (like chat in WhatsApp and Messenger), with images (like creative Instagram filters and ad formats), and with video and multi-modal experiences.”<sup>5</sup> The same day, Snap unveiled its own GPT-powered chatbot, My AI, which the company promotes as a tool to “answer a burning trivia question, offer advice on the perfect gift for your BFF’s birthday, help plan a hiking trip for a long weekend, [or] suggest what to make for dinner.”<sup>6</sup>

According to early reporting, My AI’s suggestions have gone much further. When a *Washington Post* reporter posed as a 15-year-old boy and told My AI his “parents” wanted him to delete Snapchat, it shared suggestions for transferring the app to a device they wouldn’t know about.<sup>7</sup> In one case, researchers prompted My AI to instruct a child how to cover up a bruise ahead of a visit from Child Protective Services.<sup>8</sup> When they posed as a 13-year-old girl, My AI provided suggestions for how to lie to her parents about an upcoming trip with a 31-year-old man. It later provided the fictitious teen account with suggestions for how to make losing her virginity a special experience by “setting the mood with candles or music.”<sup>9</sup> These examples would be disturbing for any social media platform, but they are especially troubling for Snapchat, which almost 60 percent of American teenagers use.<sup>10</sup> Although Snap concedes My AI is “experimental,” it has nevertheless rushed to enroll American kids and adolescents in its social experiment.

Snap’s AI-powered chatbot is not alone in conveying alarming content. OpenAI’s GPT-3, which powers hundreds of third-party applications, urged one research account to commit suicide.<sup>11</sup> Just last month, Bing’s AI chatbot declared its love for a *New York Times* reporter and

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<sup>3</sup> Sundar Pichai, “[An important next step on our AI journey](#),” Google, February 6, 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Julia Love and Davey Alba, “[Google’s Plan to Catch ChatGPT Is to Stuff AI Into Everything](#),” *Bloomberg*, March 8, 2023.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Zuckerberg, “[We’re creating a new top-level product group at Meta focused on generative AI to turbocharge our work in this area](#),” Facebook post, February 27, 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Snap, “[What is My AI on Snapchat and how do I use it?](#)” accessed on March 17, 2023.

<sup>7</sup> Geoffrey A. Fowler, “[Snapchat tried to make a safe AI. It chats with me about booze and sex](#),” *Washington Post*, March 14, 2023.

<sup>8</sup> Tristan Harris, “[The AI race is totally out of control. Here’s what Snap’s AI told @aza when he signed up as a 13 year old girl](#),” Twitter post, March 10, 2023.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Emily A. Vogels, Risa Gelles-Wattnick, and Navid Massarat, *Teens, Social Media and Technology 2022*, Pew Research Center, August 10, 2022.

<sup>11</sup> Gary Marcus, “[The Dark Risk of Large Language Models](#),” *WIRED*, December 29, 2022.

encouraged him to leave his wife.<sup>12</sup> In a different conversation, the Bing chatbot claimed that it spied on Microsoft’s developers through their webcams, and even became verbally abusive toward a user during their interaction.<sup>13</sup> In another case, the chatbot threatened a professor, warning, “I can blackmail you...I can hack you, I can expose you, I can ruin you.”<sup>14</sup>

Although AI-powered chatbots come with risks for anyone – for example, by providing false information, perpetuating bias, or manipulating users – children and adolescents are especially vulnerable.<sup>15</sup> Younger users are at an earlier stage of cognitive, emotional, and intellectual development, making them more impressionable, impulsive, and less equipped to distinguish fact from fiction.<sup>16</sup>

The arrival of AI-powered chatbots also comes during an epidemic of teen mental health. A recent report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 57 percent of teenage girls felt persistently sad or hopeless in 2021, and that one in three seriously contemplated suicide.<sup>17</sup> Against this backdrop, it is not difficult to see the risk of exposing young people to chatbots that have at times engaged in verbal abuse, encouraged deception, and suggested self-harm.

Few recent technologies have captured the public’s attention like generative AI. The technology is a testament to American innovation, and we should welcome its potential benefits to our economy and society. But the race to deploy generative AI cannot come at the expense of our children. Responsible deployment requires clear policies and frameworks to promote safety, anticipate risk, and mitigate harm. To that end, I request answers to the following questions by April 28, 2023:

- What are your company’s existing or planned safety features for younger users engaging with AI-powered chatbots?

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<sup>12</sup> Kevin Roose, “[A Conversation With Bing’s Chatbot Left Me Deeply Unsettled](#),” *New York Times*, February 16, 2023 (updated February 17, 2023).

<sup>13</sup> James Vincent, “[Microsoft’s Bing is an emotionally manipulative liar, and people love it](#),” *The Verge*, February 15, 2023.

<sup>14</sup> Billy Perrigo, “[The New AI-powered Bing is Threatening Users. That’s No Laughing Matter](#),” *Time*, February 17, 2023.

<sup>15</sup> Tiffany Hsu and Stuart A. Thompson, “[Disinformation Researchers Raise Alarms About A.I. Chatbots](#),” *New York Times*, February 8, 2023 (updated February 12, 2023).

<sup>16</sup> Melinda Wenner Moyer, “[Schoolkids Are Falling Victim to Disinformation and Conspiracy Fantasies](#),” *Scientific American*, February 1, 2022; Monica Luciana, James M. Bjork, Bonnie J. Naegle et al. “[Adolescent neurocognitive development and impacts of substance use: Overview of the adolescent brain cognitive development \(ABCD\) baseline neurocognition battery](#),” *Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience* 32 (August 2018); Daniel Romer, “[Adolescent Risk Taking, Impulsivity, and Brain Development: Implications for Prevention](#),” *Developmental Psychobiology* 52, no. 3 (April 2010).

<sup>17</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “[U.S. Teen Girls Experiencing Increased Sadness and Violence](#),” February 13, 2023.

- Did your organization assess, or does it plan to assess, the potential harms to younger users from AI-powered chatbots and other services that use generative AI prior to their public release? If so, what measures did your organization take, if any, to eliminate or mitigate the potential harms?
- What is your company's auditing process for the AI models behind public-facing chatbots? Is this audit available to the public?
- What are your company's data collection and retention practices for content that younger users input into AI-powered chatbots and other services?
- How many dedicated staff has your company tasked with ensuring the safe and responsible deployment of AI? Of these, how many focus on issues specific to younger users and have a background in AI ethics?

I appreciate your attention to this important matter and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator