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One Hundred Seventeenth
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

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May 5, 2022

Jen Easterly
Director
Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency Stop 0380
Department of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane
Washington, D.C. 20528-0380

Director Easterly:

We are writing to learn more about the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's (CISA) plans to address election-related misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation (MDM) ahead of the November 2022 elections. In the lead up to the 2020 election, CISA played a significant role in pushing back on election-related MDM prior to Election Day and in the weeks that followed. CISA also created a "rumor control" website with debunked common misconceptions about the elections process in the United States.

In November 2021, during your remarks at the RE:WIRED conference, you stated that the Agency planned to "grow and strengthen" the MDM team. You went on to say, "the most critical infrastructure is our cognitive infrastructure, so building that resilience to misinformation and disinformation, I think, is incredibly important."[1] We agree with this sentiment and look forward to learning more about your plans to expand CISA's MDM work.

The Subcommittee is also interested in learning more about CISA's plans to address the spread of MDM in languages other than English, particularly Spanish language MDM. While Latino voters were targeted by election-related disinformation during the 2016 election,[2] the rate of election mis- and disinformation targeted at Spanish-speaking voters during 2020 election cycle rose significantly, with such voters targeted by an onslaught of election-related falsehoods. For example, NPR reported in October 2020 that Black and Latino voters were being flooded with

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[1] Maggie Miller, *Cyber agency beefing up disinformation, misinformation team,* THE HILL (Nov. 10, 2021), https://thehill.com/policy/cybersecurity/580990-cyber-agency-beefing-up-disinformation-misinformation-team?rl=1
[2] Report of the Select Committee on Intelligence, *United States Senate on Russian Active Measures Campaigns and Interference in the 2016 U.S. Election, Vol. 2: Russia's Use of Social Media, with Additional Views*, at p.45 https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/ files/documents/Report_Volume2.pdf.

disinformation in the final days before the election in which the "intent was unmistakable: to depress turnout among people of color by fueling distrust in the political process."[3]

Research conducted by Equis Research and Equis Labs, who focus on studying and reaching Latino voters, found that "social media networks are doing a poor job at addressing Spanish misinformation, with less moderation and posts left up longer than in English." Indeed, some Spanish-language posts were still active on Facebook [as of October 2021] from November 2020 that "promote[d] election lies with no warning labels," and while *Facebook* and *YouTube* announced policies to remove or restrict content from the conspiracy theory movement QAnon, it continued to spread in Spanish.[4] There is no reason to believe the targeting of mis- and disinformation will slow or cease during the 2022 election cycle.

The Subcommittee looks forward to hearing from the Agency regarding its plans to combat election-related MDM, including in languages other than English. Enclosed are questions to the Agency.

Thank you in advance for your assistance with this matter. We respectfully request your responses by May 20, 2022. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee staff at (202) 225-2061.

Sincerely,

G. K. Butterfield
Chair
Subcommittee on Elections

Pete Aguilar
Member
Subcommittee on Elections

Teresa Leger Fernández
Member
Subcommittee on Elections

cc: The Honorable Zoe Lofgren, Chairperson
        Committee on House Administration

        The Honorable Darren Soto
        Member of Congress, Florida's 9th Congressional District

        The Honorable Nanette Barragán
        Member of Congress, California's 44th Congressional District

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[3] Shannon Bond, *Black And Latino Voters Flooded With Disinformation In Election's Final Days*, NPR (Oct. 30, 2020), https://www.npr.org/2020/10/30/929248146/black-and-latino-voters-flooded-with-disinformation-in-elections-final-days.

[4] Stephanie Valencia, *Misinformation online is bad in English. But it's far worse in Spanish*, The Washington Post (Oct. 28, 2021), https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2021/10/28/misinformation-spanish-facebook-social-media/.

QUESTIONS

1. Ahead of the 2022 Federal election, what specifically does CISA plan to do to "grow and expand" its efforts to combat MDM?

2. How does CISA plan to use the "rumor control" website in the 2022 Federal election?

3. How will CISA support state and local election officials as they deal with election information that is specific to their jurisdiction?

4. How is CISA identifying and tracking damaging election-related MDM, including non-English speaking communities, especially the Spanish-speaking, to identify the MDM it will focus its efforts on combatting?

5. CISA has produced some resources designed to assist election officials and the general public in identifying and combatting MDM. What additional resources or toolkits does CISA plan to release ahead of the 2022 Election?

6. How does CISA plan to engage with the general public and educate them on how to identify MDM?

7. Given the proliferation of MDM in languages other than English, does CISA have a plan to monitor and track the spread of MDM in languages other than English? If so, please provide the details of that that plan.

8. How does CISA plan to provide voters with limited English proficiency with reliable resources on election information?