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November 11, 2022

Elon Musk  
Chief Executive Officer  
Twitter, Inc.  
1355 Market Street  
Suite 900  
San Francisco, CA 94103

Dear Mr. Musk:

Yesterday, a *Washington Post* reporter easily created a fake Twitter account in my name, and by paying \$8.00 was also able to obtain Twitter's blue checkmark, signifying that Twitter had "verified" the account was indeed that of a sitting U.S. senator. It was not. Apparently, due to Twitter's lax verification practices and apparent need for cash, anyone could pay \$8.00 and impersonate someone on your platform. Selling the truth is dangerous and unacceptable. Twitter must explain how this happened and how it will prevent it from happening again.

As the *Washington Post* article explains, a reporter with "a spare iPhone, a credit card and a little creativity" was able in minutes to set up an account under the Twitter handle "@realedmarkey."<sup>1</sup> The *Post* reporter was able to accomplish this impersonation despite Twitter having previously verified my actual Twitter account under the handle "@SenMarkey." Compounding Twitter's verification dysfunction, a pop-up stated that the fake account was verified because I was a notable person in government, not because someone had paid for the verification blue checkmark.<sup>2</sup>

Safeguards such as Twitter's blue checkmark once allowed users to be smart, critical consumers of news and information in Twitter's global town square. But your Twitter takeover, rapid and haphazard imposition of platform changes, removal of safeguards against disinformation, and firing of large numbers of Twitter employees have accelerated Twitter's descent into the Wild

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<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Fowler, *We got Twitter 'verified' in minutes posing as a comedian and a senator*, Wash. Post (Nov. 11, 2020), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/11/11/twitter-blue-checkmark/>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

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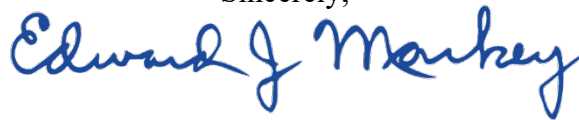
West of social media. That is unacceptable. Twitter and its leadership have a responsibility to the public to ensure the platform doesn't become a breeding ground for manipulation and deceit.

Notwithstanding Twitter's terminating Twitter Blue and paid-for blue checkmark verification shortly after this and other instances of online imposters, Twitter must explain itself. Please respond to the following questions in writing by November 25, 2002:

1. What was Twitter's process for issuing paid-for blue checkmark verification of a Twitter account? What was Twitter's process for issuing verification of an account that is "notable in government, news, entertainment, or another designated category" on your platform? Please describe the internal steps at Twitter that were supposed to be followed for these processes.
2. How did the paid-for blue check verification process differ from the free verification process that preceded it?
3. How was the *Washington Post* reporter able to obtain verification of a fake Senator Ed Markey Twitter account? Specifically, did Twitter fail to follow its internal policies for paid verification, and, if so, which ones? If Twitter did follow those policies, please explain how Twitter's system nevertheless allowed the reporter to obtain verification of the fake account.
4. Is Twitter planning to reintroduce a verification system? If so, please explain how it will work, whether it will be free or paid-for, and how it will prevent the verification of fake accounts.

Allowing an imposter to impersonate a U.S. Senator on Twitter is a serious matter that you need to address promptly. If you have any questions about this matter, please contact my Office at 202-224-2742.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator