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JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE  
(CREATED PURSUANT TO SEC. 5(a) OF PUBLIC LAW 304, 79TH CONGRESS)

**Washington, DC 20510-6602**

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May 22, 2025

Daniel Ek  
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer  
Spotify USA Inc.  
4 World Trade Center  
150 Greenwich Street, 62nd Floor  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mr. Ek:

Online drug traffickers have become increasingly adept at using digital platforms to sell fentanyl and other dangerous drugs, putting all Americans — and especially young people — at risk. According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, for example, an average of 22 American adolescents died of drug overdoses every week in 2022, and the widespread availability of counterfeit pills online played a key role in this trend.<sup>1</sup> Laboratory testing by the Drug Enforcement Administration indicates that seven out of 10 counterfeit pills that traffickers produce to mimic legitimate prescription medication actually contain a potentially fatal dose of fentanyl.<sup>2</sup> Addressing these threats requires an all-hands-on-deck approach, and based on recent reports, Spotify has not exercised the level of diligence needed. I urge you to take action to prevent fake podcasts that facilitate the illicit sale of drugs — including those that could contain fentanyl — from appearing on your platform.

According to recent news articles, fake podcasts on the Spotify platform may have directed users to illegal online pharmacies.<sup>3</sup> CNN identified dozens of fake podcasts advertising Adderall, Oxycontin, and other drugs, and a separate report from Business Insider described hundreds more — findings that “raise questions about Spotify’s moderation capabilities as AI

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Friedman and Scott E. Hadland, *The Overdose Crisis Among U.S. Adolescents*, New England Journal of Medicine (Jan. 11, 2024) ([pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10979414/](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10979414/)); KFF, *Teens, Drugs, and Overdose: Contracting Pre-Pandemic and Current Trends* (Oct. 15, 2024) ([www.kff.org/mental-health/issue-brief/teens-drugs-and-overdose-contrasting-pre-pandemic-and-current-trends/](https://www.kff.org/mental-health/issue-brief/teens-drugs-and-overdose-contrasting-pre-pandemic-and-current-trends/)).

<sup>2</sup> Drug Enforcement Administration, Pill Press Resources ([www.dea.gov/resources/pill-press-resources](https://www.dea.gov/resources/pill-press-resources)) (accessed May 19, 2025).

<sup>3</sup> *Spotify is Scrambling to Remove Dozens of Podcasts Promoting Online Prescription Drug Sales*, CNN (May 16, 2025) ([www.cnn.com/2025/05/16/tech/spotify-removing-drug-sales-podcasts](https://www.cnn.com/2025/05/16/tech/spotify-removing-drug-sales-podcasts)).

makes it easier than ever to churn out fake content.”<sup>4</sup> In some cases, these “podcasts” amount to a few seconds of audio featuring a computerized voice describing options for receiving medication without a prescription.<sup>5</sup> In other cases, episode descriptions and cover art on Spotify contain links to pharmacy websites and instructions for purchasing drugs.<sup>6</sup> In one example, a voice in a seven-second “podcast” urged listeners to “[b]uy tramadol [an opioid pain medication] online in just one click...without a prescription with legal delivery in the USA.”<sup>7</sup> Spotify users can find this content through a simple search that also returns legitimate podcasts on topics such as ADHD or addiction. The fake podcasts appear on Spotify despite platform rules prohibiting illegal and spam content, including restrictions on “[c]ontent that illicitly promotes the sale of regulated or illegal goods.”<sup>8</sup>

The scale of the fentanyl crisis requires cooperation among law enforcement, online platforms, and international partners to protect our communities. I have had heart-wrenching conversations with people across my state of New Hampshire who have experienced the unimaginable pain of losing a loved one to a drug overdose. In addition to the human toll, the fentanyl crisis has also imposed significant economic consequences. According to a March 2025 report from the White House, for example, illicit opioids cost Americans an estimated \$2.7 trillion in 2023 alone, including through lost quality of life, health care costs, reduced labor productivity, and crime-related expenses.<sup>9</sup>

To aid the Joint Economic Committee - Minority in understanding the scope of illegal drug-related activity on the Spotify platform and the related content moderation activities that the company has undertaken, please provide responses to the following document and information requests:

1. What moderation tools, policies, or procedures has Spotify employed to combat drug-related content on its platform, and what new approaches will the company adopt, if any, given recent reporting?

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<sup>4</sup> *Id.*; *Spotify Takes Down ‘Podcasts’ Peddling Opioids*, Business Insider (May 15, 2025) ([www.businessinsider.com/spotify-takes-down-podcasts-peddling-drugs-opioids-2025-5](http://www.businessinsider.com/spotify-takes-down-podcasts-peddling-drugs-opioids-2025-5)).

<sup>5</sup> *Spotify is Scrambling to Remove Dozens of Podcasts Promoting Online Prescription Drug Sales*, CNN (May 16, 2025) ([www.cnn.com/2025/05/16/tech/spotify-removing-drug-sales-podcasts](http://www.cnn.com/2025/05/16/tech/spotify-removing-drug-sales-podcasts)).

<sup>6</sup> *Spotify Takes Down ‘Podcasts’ Peddling Opioids*, Business Insider (May 15, 2025) ([www.businessinsider.com/spotify-takes-down-podcasts-peddling-drugs-opioids-2025-5](http://www.businessinsider.com/spotify-takes-down-podcasts-peddling-drugs-opioids-2025-5)).

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> Spotify, Spotify Platform Rules ([www.spotify.com/us/safetyandprivacy/platform-rules](http://www.spotify.com/us/safetyandprivacy/platform-rules)) (accessed May 19, 2025).

<sup>9</sup> The White House, *The Staggering Cost of the Illicit Opioid Epidemic in the United States* (Mar. 26, 2025) ([www.whitehouse.gov/articles/2025/03/the-staggering-cost-of-the-illicit-opioid-epidemic-in-the-united-states/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/articles/2025/03/the-staggering-cost-of-the-illicit-opioid-epidemic-in-the-united-states/)).

2. Spotify has stated that it has deployed technology from Kinzen — a company with expertise in analyzing “harmful content and hate speech in multiple languages” — to identify emerging threats on the platform.<sup>10</sup> How has it used this or other similar technology to address illegal drug-related activity?
3. How many podcasts, episode descriptions, or other content has Spotify removed to date due to drug-related material that violates Spotify’s own rules? Please break down this total by the type of content that the company has removed and the nature of the rule violation.
4. How many users to date have interacted with content Spotify has removed due to drug-related material? Please break down this total by the type of content, the nature of the interaction, and the age of the user.
5. What revenue, if any, has Spotify received to date related to content that the company has removed due to drug-related material?
6. What guidance has Spotify received concerning the issues described above from its Safety Advisory Council, which advises the company “in key areas like policy and safety-feature development”?<sup>11</sup> Please provide any documents that the Safety Advisory Council has generated concerning the presence, detection, or removal of drug-related content on the Spotify platform.
7. What steps, if any, does Spotify take to cooperate and work with law enforcement when it discovers illegal activity, especially illegal drug-related activity, on its platform?

Please provide your responses as soon as possible but in no event later than June 12, 2025. If you have any questions related to this request, please contact Brandon Reavis of the Committee staff at [Brandon\\_Reavis@jec.senate.gov](mailto:Brandon_Reavis@jec.senate.gov) or (202) 224-2599. Please send any official correspondence relating to this request to [Brandon\\_Reavis@jec.senate.gov](mailto:Brandon_Reavis@jec.senate.gov).

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<sup>10</sup> Spotify: *Spotify Continues to Ramp Up Platform Safety Efforts with Acquisition of Kinzen* (Oct. 5, 2022) ([newsroom.spotify.com/2022-10-05/spotify-continues-to-ramp-up-platform-safety-efforts-with-acquisition-of-kinzen/](https://newsroom.spotify.com/2022-10-05/spotify-continues-to-ramp-up-platform-safety-efforts-with-acquisition-of-kinzen/)).

<sup>11</sup> Spotify: *Introducing the Spotify Safety Advisory Council* (June 13, 2022) ([newsroom.spotify.com/2022-06-13/introducing-the-spotify-safety-advisory-council/](https://newsroom.spotify.com/2022-06-13/introducing-the-spotify-safety-advisory-council/)).

Daniel Ek  
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Sincerely,



Margaret Wood Hassan  
Ranking Member

cc: David Schweikert  
Chairman

Eric Schmitt  
Vice Chairman