

Prescription for Harm: Drug-Related Content and Moderation Efforts on the Spotify Platform



PRESCRIPTION FOR HARM: DRUG-RELATED CONTENT AND MODERATION EFFORTS ON THE SPOTIFY PLATFORM

Executive Summary

Throughout her time in Congress, U.S. Senator Maggie Hassan (D-NH) has spearheaded bipartisan efforts to combat the fentanyl crisis, including through measures to permanently schedule fentanyl-related substances as Schedule I drugs, provide drug detection tools to law enforcement officials, and expand access to treatment and recovery services. In 2025, in her new role as Ranking Member of the Joint Economic Committee, Senator Hassan also launched a major initiative to combat scams targeting Americans.

As part of both these efforts, in May 2025, Ranking Member Hassan requested information from Spotify about reports that podcasts on the platform appeared to direct users to illegal online pharmacies, including sites purportedly selling opioid medications, such as oxycodone and Vicodin, without a prescription. The presence of this content – and the fact that Spotify apparently only discovered and started to address it after public reporting – raises questions about the platform’s moderation capabilities in an era of AI-generated material. Ranking Member Hassan requested that Spotify describe its content moderation measures, detail the volume and nature of the drug-related content at issue, and take further action against similar content on the platform. In its ensuing investigation, the Committee identified notable limitations in Spotify’s efforts to remove harmful content. Importantly, challenges with drug-related spam content are not unique to Spotify; the findings in this report should raise alarm bells for online platforms across the board as they contend with the rising use of AI.

Key Finding: Drug-Related Content on Spotify and Moderation Efforts

In its response to Ranking Member Hassan, Spotify stated its belief that the drug-related podcasts highlighted in media reports represented “a spam attack aimed at manipulating search engine rankings.” In general, this content can drive internet traffic to websites that contain malware, phishing attempts, or other harmful content that criminals can use to facilitate costly financial scams against consumers. The company also described several ongoing moderation approaches that it is taking to address drug-related content, including detecting drug terms and monitoring account-level behavior; using AI technology to review newly created and edited

podcasts; and working with an outside entity to prevent illegal online pharmacies from advertising on the platform.

Key Finding: Limitations in Spotify's Content Moderation

This report also details notable limitations in Spotify's efforts to detect and remove drug-related content that could facilitate costly scams and/or illicit drug sales:

- The fact that Spotify seemingly acted against drug-related content identified in May 2025 only after media reports – and that the Committee found new drug-related content throughout the course of its investigation – raises questions about the effectiveness of the company's proactive moderation capabilities. These concerns are compounded by the fact that Spotify took enforcement actions against more than 3,500 podcast accounts due to drug-related content last year through November 2025 – after public reporting and Ranking Member Hassan's requests – but acted against fewer than 100 accounts for the same reason in 2024.
- Despite Spotify stating to the Committee that it has a process to refer content to law enforcement when needed, none of the drug-related content that Spotify took enforcement actions against last year through November 2025 – covering more than 3,000 shows and 57,000 individual episodes – prompted the company to make reports to law enforcement.
 - o This is especially concerning given, for example, that one podcast that the Committee identified for Spotify in July 2025 (and which the company apparently removed) contained a link to "opioidstores.com," which the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and other federal agencies later seized in a joint operation.
- Spotify has limited insight into the way that users engage with links that might lead to illegal online pharmacies or scam activities. As the company stated: "Spotify does not track interaction with hyperlinks embedded in podcast content."

Key Finding: Potentially Harmful Content Has Persisted on Spotify and Across Other Online Platforms

Without stronger content moderation by online platforms to protect consumers, harmful content will continue to expose users to material related to scams or illicit drugs. This content has persisted on Spotify and on other online platforms as well. A December 2025 search of Spotify by Committee staff, for example, found a public playlist entitled "Skip the Hassle and Buy Oxycodone Online Today."¹ Similarly, on the iHeart podcast platform, staff found a podcast episode entitled "Buy Xanax Pills Online Affordable Solutions, Fast Delivery" and a podcast series from "Alprazolab" profiling different drugs in brief episodes like "Buy Opana Er 40Mg [a

prescription opioid] Online” and “Buy Ms Contin 30Mg [another prescription opioid] Online.”² Staff also found a similar “Alprazolab” podcast series on Amazon Music and Podchaser.³

As AI supercharges the sophistication and scale of scam attempts and other illegal activity, Spotify’s experience with drug-related content demonstrates the importance of online platforms deploying sophisticated, proactive methods that protect Americans from harmful content.

TERMS	DEFINITIONS
Malware	Malicious software, often installed without the knowledge of users, that is designed to disrupt, damage, or penetrate computer systems, including for the purpose of stealing sensitive information. ⁴
Phishing Attempt	An attempt by scammers to steal sensitive information like passwords and credit card numbers by posing as a reputable person, business, or other entity. ⁵
Illegal Online Pharmacy	An illegal website that fails to require a valid prescription for prescription drugs, sells drugs not approved by the FDA, and/or dispenses prescription drugs without a valid pharmacy license. ⁶
Search Engine Optimization (SEO)	The use of strategies related to content, structure, and credibility, among other factors, to boost the prominence of a website in search results. ⁷
SEO “Poisoning”	A growing threat in which malicious actors use a variety of means to boost the prominence — in search results — of websites designed to scam users or inflict other harms, making them appear more authentic to consumers. ⁸
Spam Attacks	In the SEO context, an effort to fill a website with malicious links, malware, or other content to inflate search rankings for a different website. ⁹

Introduction and Methodology

In May 2025, multiple media reports described podcasts on the Spotify platform that appeared to direct users to illegal online pharmacies.¹⁰ CNN, for example, identified dozens of podcasts advertising Adderall, Oxycontin, and other opioids — findings that “raise[d] questions about Spotify’s moderation capabilities as AI makes it easier than ever to churn out fake content.”¹¹ A separate report from *Business Insider* described hundreds of additional podcasts.¹² In some cases, these “podcasts” only included a few seconds of audio featuring a computerized voice advertising medication for delivery without a prescription.¹³ In other cases, episode descriptions and cover art on Spotify contained links to what appeared to be pharmacy websites and

instructions for purchasing drugs.¹⁴ 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”¹⁵ – despite the fact that federal law prohibits individuals from buying opioids or any other controlled substance without a prescription.¹⁶ The content also appeared 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.”¹⁷ Spotify users could find this content through a simple search that also returned legitimate podcasts on topics like ADHD or addiction.¹⁸

According to CNN, Spotify appeared to remove certain podcasts after CNN engaged with this content in preparation for CNN’s May 2025 report, but “more than two dozen others remained active until CNN asked the platform about them.”¹⁹ Spotify reportedly removed these 26 podcasts “within hours” after CNN sent the company a list of content.²⁰ Similar content, however, continued to appear on the platform on the morning that CNN published its report.²¹

The presence of this kind of content on Spotify is especially concerning given the rise of online drug trafficking and the danger that fentanyl and other illicit drugs pose to Americans. Experts have noted that adolescents “are especially at risk of encountering opportunities to purchase illicit drugs through their use of social media.”²² According to the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy, almost 95 percent of websites offering prescription drugs operate illegally, and counterfeit pills sold through these websites frequently contain fentanyl.²³ Moreover, according to the DEA, website operators “go to great lengths to make [these] websites look like legitimate online pharmacies – they offer 24-hour customer service, post online reviews and safety facts, and offer deep discounts to deceive customers into believing they are buying from a reputable business.”²⁴

Given these concerns, Ranking Member Hassan issued requests to Spotify on May 22, 2025, seeking additional information about the podcasts that public reporting had identified. These requests focused on measures that Spotify had undertaken to combat drug-related content on its platform; the volume of the content that Spotify had removed after finding violations of its rules; user interactions and revenue related to removed content; and Spotify cooperation, if any, with law enforcement after discovering illicit drug-related activity.²⁵ Ranking Member Hassan also urged Spotify to take additional action to prevent podcasts that facilitate the illicit sale of drugs – including those that could contain fentanyl – from appearing on its platform.²⁶ Following these requests, Spotify provided a written response on June 12, 2025, and provided Committee staff with a briefing on July 10, 2025.²⁷ After the briefing, staff found and provided a list of additional problematic content on the Spotify platform to the company.²⁸ This content included a podcast entitled “Dilaudid Medication for pain,” which stated “25% Off Your Favorites! USE CODE-‘CHRISTMAS25’” in its episode description.²⁹ (Dilaudid is a type of opioid.³⁰) Spotify provided a second written response on August 29, 2025.³¹ Finally, the

company provided additional written responses in November 2025, January 2026, and April 2026 in response to staff-level questions.³²

Despite Actions to Address Fraudulent or Harmful Content, Notable Gaps in Spotify Moderation Remain

Spotify Identified Drug-Related Content as Spam Attacks and Search Engine Optimization Efforts

In response to Ranking Member Hassan’s requests, Spotify stated that the podcasts identified by the media and Committee staff exhibited characteristics of “a spam attack aimed at manipulating search engine rankings rather than a direct attempt to sell drugs to Spotify users.”³³ According to Spotify, “the objective of these actors was to leverage podcasts to improve the visibility of their content on search engines.”³⁴ Spotify determined that the podcasts constituted a spam attack due to their short episode lengths, titles, and metadata.³⁵ The platform found that this content was “largely devoid of spoken content” and “failed to attract meaningful engagement – 94% had zero streams, and 99% had fewer than ten.”³⁶ Only five podcasts had more than 100 streams, which Spotify defined as listening sessions longer than 30 seconds.³⁷ Two of these podcasts had almost 13,000 total streams and directed users to a website explaining the process of purchasing modafinil – a drug promoting wakefulness to treat narcolepsy, among other conditions – from online sources, including by sending Bitcoin.³⁸ Another podcast with 125 streams included links to two sites appearing as “online pharmacy e-marketplaces” and purporting to sell drugs that treat cancer, HIV/AIDS, and other serious conditions.³⁹ In addition, one podcast with around 100 streams linked to a now-defunct website purporting to sell the non-narcotic medication gabapentin, which it described as “safe and effective to reduce pain and discomfort, with minimal side effects.”⁴⁰

In some cases, Spotify noted that the podcasts it identified provided links to fake pharmacies that likely engaged in scam activity, based on the prices they offered and the ability for users to conduct transactions via credit card.⁴¹ (These types of websites are distinct from illegal pharmacies that do, in fact, offer medication for purchase.) In addition, Spotify explained that none of the podcasts that the company detected and removed for drug-related content were monetized through Spotify tools or appeared as paid advertising content.⁴² The company has also emphasized that “Spotify users cannot purchase drugs on our platform under any circumstances.”⁴³

The description of content that Spotify provided to the Committee matches examples of search engine optimization (SEO) “poisoning,” a growing threat across the internet in which malicious actors use various techniques to make potentially dangerous websites appear more prominently in search results.⁴⁴ CrowdStrike, a leading cybersecurity firm, has noted that using these boosted websites could lead to “credential theft, malware infections, and financial losses” for consumers.⁴⁵ Reporting from 2024, for example, described individuals “using Spotify playlists and

podcasts to push pirated software, game cheat codes, spam links and malware sites.”⁴⁶ In this scheme, spammers “exploit Spotify playlists by injecting targeted keywords, such as ‘free download,’ ‘crack’ or ‘warez,’ into titles and descriptions” to manipulate search results and drive internet traffic to their links.⁴⁷ In some cases, these links can lead to fake cryptocurrency giveaways or phishing pages designed to facilitate identity theft.⁴⁸ Importantly, SEO poisoning efforts have impacted a wide variety of legitimate websites and hosting platforms, including WordPress, GitHub, and Reddit.⁴⁹ Reporting from *WIRED* has also noted that “no industry has been so transformed by AI than the shadowy world of search engine optimization.”⁵⁰

Beyond the direct financial losses that scams associated with SEO efforts can inflict on consumers, the proliferation of malicious and fraudulent content can also draw attention and revenue away from legitimate businesses and creators who rely on online platforms to generate sales and engagement. By manipulating rankings, spam can crowd out content from legitimate actors, suppressing their visibility – and ultimately their revenue.⁵¹ Over time, the continued proliferation of malicious content may cause lasting damage to consumer trust, lowering platform engagement and sales. Already, around half of U.S. adults believe scams are a major problem on online shopping platforms, banking and payment sites, and apps, according to a recent survey – and more than 70 percent have already personally experienced an online scam or attack.⁵²

Separately, online tools have also enabled users to create and publish AI-generated podcasts. For instance, one company – a “creative studio for AI podcasting” – allows users to create podcasts with “customizable AI hosts and voice clones, editable scripts, and built-in Spotify distribution.”⁵³ In one example that Committee staff identified for Spotify in July 2025, an AI-generated podcast, purportedly published by a real psychiatrist, included episodes like “Midazolam: The Fast-Acting Benzodiazepine for Sedation & Anxiety” and “Estazolam: A Powerful Benzodiazepine for Insomnia Relief.”⁵⁴ (Benzodiazepines are a category of prescription drugs used to relieve anxiety, among other purposes; according to DEA, “[m]isuse is frequently associated with adolescents and young adults who take the drug orally or crush it up and snort it to get high.”⁵⁵)

Spotify Reported Actions Against Drug-Related Podcasts After Outreach, Described Measures to Detect Similar Material, and Announced New Efforts to Address Spam and AI Music Content

Regarding enforcement related to the specific drug-related content reported in May 2025, Spotify disclosed to the Committee in August 2025 that its “enforcement actions...have involved 2,849 distinct podcast owners, reflecting the unique accounts responsible for the removed shows.”⁵⁶ In November 2025, the company provided an update that it had taken enforcement actions against more than 3,500 podcast accounts in 2025 due to drug-related content.⁵⁷ At that time, the company also informed the Committee that its enforcement actions involved more than 3,000 shows and more than 57,000 individual episodes.⁵⁸ In contrast, Spotify reported that in 2024 – prior to the CNN reporting and Ranking Member Hassan’s requests – the company took enforcement actions against just 87 podcast accounts due to drug-related content.⁵⁹ Moreover,

Spotify stated to the Committee that it has “less complete” data for previous years, “as we did not track removals in this way.”⁶⁰ The company also noted that its enforcement policies allow for account suspension or termination in response to rule violations, including “measures against repeat and egregious violators.”⁶¹

In its correspondence with the Committee, Spotify identified several measures that the platform employs to improve its detection of drug-related content, including “maintaining a database of pharmaceutical terms and brand names linked to abuse, using keyword detection and account-level signals, and localizing our tools for non-English content.”⁶² This database includes generic prescription drug terms, brand name prescription drug terms, and illicit drug terms, and the company works to update this list with new terms, including slang.⁶³ Regarding account-level signals of drug-related content, Spotify explained that it “tracks and links known violative account attributes across accounts” to prevent repeat offenses and recidivism, including through monitoring user behavior.⁶⁴ Apart from drug-related material, Spotify also stated that it maintains lists of terms related to other dangerous content online, including explosive devices, prohibited weapons, and malware.⁶⁵ In addition, the company stated that it works with expert organizations to bolster its efforts to monitor for content and bad actors related to violent extremism, terrorism, and child safety violations.⁶⁶

Separately, Spotify explained that it uses AI technology “to proactively review newly created and edited podcasts to automatically remove or flag shows and episodes for human review.”⁶⁷ According to the company, this human review occurs “where a potential violation is less clear or when additional context may need to be considered.”⁶⁸ The company stated that its systems delist and de-index violative content from search results immediately upon its removal from the platform; if content remains visible in search results, Spotify has not found that it violates platform rules at the time of review.⁶⁹ To supplement these efforts, Spotify has also maintained a partnership with LegitScript to prevent advertising for illegal online pharmacies from appearing on the platform.⁷⁰ Specifically, LegitScript maintains databases of prescription drug terms, dangerous supplements, and pharmacy domains; identifies violative content; and conducts quarterly podcast content reviews, among other measures.⁷¹ Spotify further explained that these quarterly reviews “are one of many inputs we use to detect potentially violative content on the platform,” and “[t]he decision to remove content from the platform is solely Spotify’s.”⁷²

Of note, Spotify announced in September 2025 that it had removed 75 million spam music tracks – but not podcasts – over the past year that it had either flagged prior to uploading as part of an existing filtering process or removed from the platform after identifying illicit content.⁷³ In connection with this announcement, Spotify acknowledged: “Spam tactics such as mass uploads, duplicates, SEO hacks, artificially short track abuse, and other forms of slop have become easier to exploit as AI tools make it simpler for anyone to generate large volumes of music.”⁷⁴ The company also previewed the implementation of a new music filter to identify and flag uploaders of spam content and block related tracks from appearing in platform recommendations.⁷⁵ The

company further noted that it would strengthen rules on music tracks with vocal deepfakes, stating that “[v]ocal impersonation is only allowed in music on Spotify when the impersonated artist has authorized the usage.”⁷⁶ In addition, the company announced it would help develop and support a new voluntary standard for disclosing the use of AI in content.⁷⁷ In correspondence with the Committee, the company explained that “[o]ur recently announced AI protections are focused on music content as they were specific to music metadata, music-specific spam tactics, and musical vocal impersonation.”⁷⁸

Notable Gaps Remain in Spotify Moderation Efforts

The information Spotify provided to the Committee showed notable gaps in its efforts to detect and remove drug-related content on the platform. First, although Spotify stated that its “longstanding practice is to report content to law enforcement when we identify a credible threat of serious harm to individuals, such as imminent risks to life or physical safety,” the company explained that *none* of the drug-related content across the more than 3,500 podcast accounts, 3,000 shows, and 57,000 episodes described above met this threshold.⁷⁹ Spotify further stated that “the content at issue was spam associated with a search engine optimization scheme, not evidence of transactional drug activity.”⁸⁰

As noted previously, however, content on Spotify that public reporting and Committee staff identified included links to online pharmacies purporting to sell opioids and other drugs in violation of federal law.⁸¹ In one example, a podcast on Spotify that the Committee found and flagged for the company in July 2025 contained a link to the website “opioidstores.com,” which was later seized as part of a joint operation by the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of New York, the DEA, the Internal Revenue Service, the FDA, and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.⁸² See Figure 1 and Figure 2 below. In another example described above, a podcast that Spotify identified as receiving 125 streams included links to websites appearing as “online pharmacy e-marketplaces” and purporting to sell drugs to treat life-threatening conditions like cancer and HIV/AIDS.⁸³

Figure 1: Podcast Appearing on Spotify as of July 2025 with Link to OpioidStores.Com

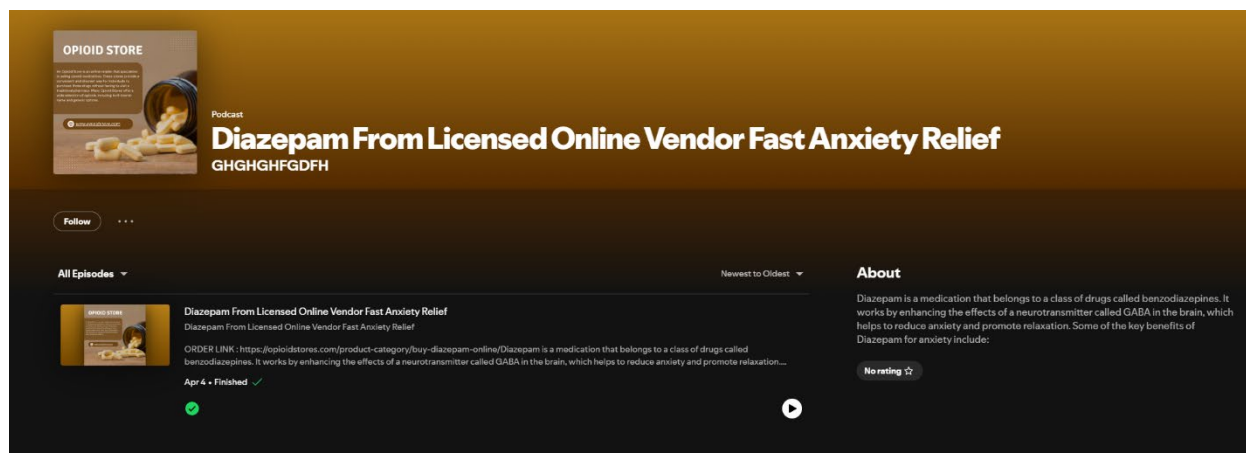


Figure 2: Website Seizure Notice for OpioidStores.Com



Spotify also declined to answer questions from the Committee regarding the total number of reports related to illicit drugs that the company has made to law enforcement, if any, and whether and to what extent the company has made proactive referrals related to illicit drug activity to the DEA.⁸⁴ The social media company Snap, for example, explained in a statement on the fentanyl crisis that it “regularly make[s] proactive referrals relating to illicit drug activity to the DEA.”⁸⁵ Snap has also stated that “when we identify Snapchatters attempting to sell, exchange or facilitate sales of dangerous and illicit drugs, we may, in some instances, refer the conduct to law enforcement.”⁸⁶ In addition, Meta has stated, generally, that it “proactively cooperate[s] with law enforcement authorities to help combat the sale and distribution of illicit drugs.”⁸⁷ Spotify stated to the Committee that as “a licensed-content streaming service for music, podcasts and audiobooks,” its “policies and enforcement actions are tailored to the specific structure and use of our platform, which is different from how social media platforms work.”⁸⁸

Second, Spotify also has limited insight into the way users engage with links that might lead to illegal online pharmacies or scam activities. The company explained to the Committee that its “user analytics primarily focus on engagement with content itself, excluding third-party link interactions unless they are tied to paid advertisements that Spotify facilitated via direct sales or monetization via Spotify for Creators or Megaphone.”⁸⁹ More plainly stated, “Spotify does not

track interaction with hyperlinks embedded in podcast content.”⁹⁰ Without exceptions to this policy for links embedded in content that the company flags for illegal or dangerous activity, Spotify may be hindered in its ability to determine whether limited streams for drug-related podcasts also mean limited user engagement with links contained in their descriptions.

Finally, Spotify also has no policy to ban purely AI content, and a Spotify representative explained that the company is not well-placed to determine when content is AI-generated.⁹¹ Even after the company announced expanded AI-related policies in September 2025, reporting stated that “Spotify has also not announced any actions to ban or deprive pure AI-generated tracks.”⁹² The company did, however, announce stronger protections around AI voice clones and other forms of impersonation.⁹³ The company has also stressed that it does not allow any content – AI-generated or otherwise – that violates intellectual property rights or its platform rules.⁹⁴ Importantly, Spotify has also noted that no major streaming platform has instituted a policy to ban AI-generated content in the United States or in other countries.⁹⁵ In November 2025, however, iHeartMedia – owner of more than 850 radio stations and the iHeart streaming platform – did announce a limited prohibition on AI-generated content, which included a pledge that “the podcasts we publish are...Guaranteed Human.”⁹⁶

Potentially Harmful Content Has Persisted on Spotify and Across Other Platforms

Even after public reporting and outreach from Ranking Member Hassan, spam content related to dangerous drugs continued to appear on Spotify. In addition to the content that Committee staff identified for Spotify in July 2025, a December 2025 search of the platform, for example, found a public playlist entitled “Skip the Hassle and Buy Oxycodone Online Today” (with a link in its description to a website).⁹⁷

The Spotify example should also raise alarm bells for other online platforms as they attempt to protect users in a changing technological landscape. On the iHeart podcast platform, for example, Committee staff found a podcast episode entitled “Buy Xanax Pills Online Affordable Solutions, Fast Delivery” and a podcast series from “Alprazolab” profiling different drugs in brief episodes like “Buy Opana Er 40Mg [a prescription opioid] Online and “Buy Ms Contin 30Mg [another prescription opioid] Online.”⁹⁸ Staff also found a similar “Alprazolab” podcast series on Amazon Music and Podchaser.⁹⁹ In addition, Spotify has noted in correspondence with the Committee that spam attacks to optimize search results have led to drug-related content appearing “across the internet,” including on a variety of local, state, and federal government websites.¹⁰⁰

Conclusion

The information that Spotify provided to the Committee indicates ongoing efforts to address drug-related content on the platform, as well as shortcomings related to the company's approach. Spotify seemingly acted against drug-related content identified in May 2025 only after public reporting, and Committee staff continued to find drug-related content on the platform afterward – raising questions about gaps in the company's proactive moderation capabilities. These concerns are compounded by the fact that Spotify took enforcement actions against more than 3,500 podcast accounts due to drug-related content last year through November 2025 – after media reporting and Ranking Member Hassan's requests – but acted against fewer than 100 accounts for the same reason in 2024.

Importantly, spam content that could expose users to illicit drugs or financial scams appears across the internet, and the responsibility to act against this harmful content rests not just with one company but with all online platforms. As AI supercharges the sophistication and scale of scam attempts and other illegal activity, Spotify's experience with drug-related content demonstrates the importance of online platforms deploying sophisticated, proactive methods that protect Americans from harmful content.

¹ Screenshots and links on file with the Committee.

² Screenshots and links on file with the Committee.

³ Screenshots and links on file with the Committee.

⁴ Federal Trade Commission, *Malware: How to Protect Against, Detect, and Remove It* (consumer.ftc.gov/articles/malware-how-protect-against-detect-and-remove-it) (accessed May 18, 2026); Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, *Malware, Phishing, and Ransomware* (www.cisa.gov/topics/cyber-threats-and-advisories/malware-phishing-and-ransomware) (accessed Feb. 17, 2026).

⁵ Cloudflare, *What is a Phishing Attack?* (www.cloudflare.com/learning/access-management/phishing-attack/) (accessed Dec. 4, 2025).

⁶ LegitScript, *What Makes an Internet Pharmacy "Rogue"?* (www.legitscript.com/what-makes-an-internet-pharmacy-rogue/) (accessed Dec. 4, 2025).

⁷ American Marketing Association, *What is SEO Marketing? [A Comprehensive Overview]* (Mar. 11, 2025) (www.ama.org/marketing-news/what-is-seo-marketing/).

⁸ CrowdStrike, *What is SEO Poisoning?* (May 3, 2023) (www.crowdstrike.com/en-us/cybersecurity-101/social-engineering/seo-poisoning/).

⁹ CHEQ, *What is SEO Spam and How Does It Impact Your Site?* (May 10, 2023) (cheq.ai/blog/what-is-seo-spam-2/).

¹⁰ *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).

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *We Found 200 ‘Podcasts’ Peddling Opioids. Now Spotify Is Taking Them Down*, Business Insider (May 15, 2025) (www.businessinsider.com/spotify-takes-down-podcasts-peddling-drugs-opioids-2025-5).

¹³ *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).

¹⁴ *We Found 200 ‘Podcasts’ Peddling Opioids. Now Spotify Is Taking Them Down*, Business Insider (May 15, 2025) (www.businessinsider.com/spotify-takes-down-podcasts-peddling-drugs-opioids-2025-5).

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, *DEA Consumer Alert: Report Suspected Unlawful Sales of Pharmaceutical Drugs on the Internet* (www.dea.gov/scams/consumer_alert.html) (accessed Jan. 22, 2026).

¹⁷ Spotify, *Spotify Platform Rules* (www.spotify.com/us/safetyandprivacy/platform-rules) (accessed May 19, 2025).

¹⁸ *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).

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Id.*

²² Alexia Ferguson et al., *Social Media and Fentanyl Sales*, Penn State Social Science Research Institute (Oct. 30, 2025) (evidence2impact.psu.edu/resources/social-media-and-fentanyl-sales-2/).

²³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Potential Public Health Risk Among Individuals Ordering Counterfeit Prescription Medications from Online Pharmacies* (Oct. 2, 2024) (www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2024/s1002-counterfit-prescription-online-pharmacies.html).

²⁴ U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, *2025 National Drug Threat Assessment* (DEA-DCT-DIR-007-25) (May 2025) (www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2025-07/2025NationalDrugThreatAssessment.pdf).

²⁵ Letter from Ranking Member Hassan to Daniel Ek, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Spotify USA Inc. (May 22, 2025).

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ Letter from Spotify to Ranking Member Hassan (June 12, 2025); Spotify, Briefing with the Joint Economic Committee Minority Staff (July 10, 2025).

²⁸ Email from Joint Economic Committee Minority Staff to Spotify (July 22, 2025).

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, Hydromorphone (Mar. 2025) (www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_chem_info/hydromorphone.pdf).

³¹ Letter from Spotify to Ranking Member Hassan (Aug. 29, 2025).

³² Email from Spotify to Joint Economic Committee Minority Staff (Nov. 7, 2025); Email from Spotify to Joint Economic Committee Minority Staff (Jan. 16, 2026); Spotify, Responses to Joint Economic Committee Minority Staff (Apr. 13, 2026).

³³ Letter from Spotify to Ranking Member Hassan (June 12, 2025).

³⁴ Spotify, Responses to Joint Economic Committee Minority Staff (Apr. 13, 2026).

³⁵ Spotify, Briefing with the Joint Economic Committee Minority Staff (July 10, 2025).

³⁶ Letter from Spotify to Ranking Member Hassan (June 12, 2025).

³⁷ Spotify, Briefing with the Joint Economic Committee Minority Staff (July 10, 2025).

³⁸ Email from Spotify to Joint Economic Committee Minority Staff (Jan. 16, 2026).

³⁹ *Id.*

⁴⁰ *Id.*

⁴¹ Spotify, Briefing with the Joint Economic Committee Minority Staff (July 10, 2025). The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has warned against using online pharmacies that offer “deep discounts or prices that seem too good to be true” or do not provide clear protections for personal and financial information. U.S. Food and Drug Administration, *How to Buy Medicines Safely From an Online Pharmacy* (Jan. 2, 2025) (www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/how-buy-medicines-safely-online-pharmacy).

⁴² Letter from Spotify to Ranking Member Hassan (Aug. 29, 2025).

⁴³ Letter from Spotify to Ranking Member Hassan (June 12, 2025).

⁴⁴ CrowdStrike, *What is SEO Poisoning?* (May 3, 2023) (www.crowdstrike.com/en-us/cybersecurity-101/social-engineering/seo-poisoning/).

⁴⁵ *Id.*

⁴⁶ *Spotify Playlists are Being Hijacked to Promote Pirated Software and Scams*, Fox News (Nov. 28, 2024) (www.foxnews.com/tech/spotify-playlists-being-hijacked-promote-pirated-software-scams).

⁴⁷ *Id.*

⁴⁸ *Id.*

⁴⁹ See Sophos, *SolarMarker Campaign Used Novel Registry Changes to Establish Persistence* (Feb. 1, 2022) (www.sophos.com/en-us/blog/solarmarker-campaign-used-novel-registry-changes-to-establish-persistence); 404 Media, *AI Is Poisoning Reddit to Promote Products and Game Google With 'Parasite SEO'* (Apr. 23, 2024) (www.404media.co/ai-is-poisoning-reddit-to-promote-products-and-game-google-with-parasite-seo/); TechRadar, *Chinese Malware is Flooding GitHub Pages - HiddenGh0st, Winos and kkRAT Hit Devs Via SEO Poisoning* (Sept. 15, 2025) (www.techradar.com/pro/security/chinese-malware-is-flooding-github-pages-hiddengh0st-winos-and-kkrat-hit-devs-via-seo-poisoning).

⁵⁰ *To Fight AI Search Spam, Prioritize Real Human Voices*, WIRED (Dec. 30, 2024) (www.wired.com/story/optimize-for-authentic-voices-in-a-sea-of-ai-search-spam/).

⁵¹ AWD, *Understanding the Dangers of SEO Poisoning: A Guide For Businesses and Consumers* (www.awd.com.au/it-solutions/understanding-the-dangers-of-seo-poisoning-a-guide-for-businesses-and-consumers/) (accessed Nov. 14, 2025).

⁵² Pew Research Center, *Online Scams and Attacks in America Today* (July 31, 2025) (www.pewresearch.org/internet/2025/07/31/online-scams-and-attacks-in-america-today/).

⁵³ Jellypod, Home Page (jellypod.ai/) (accessed Nov. 14, 2025).

⁵⁴ See, e.g., *Estazolam: A Powerful Benzodiazepine for Insomnia*, Podcast Episode (Feb. 25, 2025) (open.spotify.com/episode/7EKxpQKu7c7MzGrEGYd6SB).

⁵⁵ U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, *Drug Fact Sheet: Benzodiazepines* (Dec. 2024) (www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2025-01/Benzodiazepines-2024-Drug-Fact-Sheet.pdf).

⁵⁶ Letter from Spotify to Ranking Member Hassan (Aug. 29, 2025).

⁵⁷ Email from Spotify to Joint Economic Committee Minority Staff (Nov. 7, 2025).

⁵⁸ *Id.*

⁵⁹ *Id.*

⁶⁰ *Id.*

⁶¹ Letter from Spotify to Ranking Member Hassan (Aug. 29, 2025).

⁶² Letter from Spotify to Ranking Member Hassan (June 12, 2025).

⁶³ Email from Spotify to Joint Economic Committee Minority Staff (Nov. 7, 2025).

⁶⁴ Letter from Spotify to Ranking Member Hassan (Aug. 29, 2025).

⁶⁵ Email from Spotify to Joint Economic Committee Minority Staff (Nov. 7, 2025).

⁶⁶ *Id.*

⁶⁷ Letter from Spotify to Ranking Member Hassan (Aug. 29, 2025).

⁶⁸ Email from Spotify to Joint Economic Committee Minority Staff (Nov. 7, 2025).

⁶⁹ Letter from Spotify to Ranking Member Hassan (Aug. 29, 2025).

⁷⁰ Letter from Spotify to Ranking Member Hassan (June 12, 2025).

⁷¹ Letter from Spotify to Ranking Member Hassan (Aug. 29, 2025).

⁷² Spotify, Responses to Joint Economic Committee Minority Staff (Apr. 13, 2026).

⁷³ *Spotify Removes 75m Spam Tracks in Past Year as AI Increases Ability to Make Fake Music*, The Guardian (Sept. 25, 2025) (www.theguardian.com/music/2025/sep/25/spotify-removes-75m-spam-tracks-past-year-ai-increases-ability-make-fake-music).

⁷⁴ *Spotify: Spotify Strengthens AI Protections for Artists, Songwriters, and Producers* (Sept. 25, 2025) (newsroom.spotify.com/2025-09-25/spotify-strengthens-ai-protections/).

⁷⁵ *Spotify Removes 75m Spam Tracks in Past Year as AI Increases Ability to Make Fake Music*, The Guardian (Sept. 25, 2025) (www.theguardian.com/music/2025/sep/25/spotify-removes-75m-spam-tracks-past-year-ai-increases-ability-make-fake-music).

⁷⁶ *Spotify: Spotify Strengthens AI Protections for Artists, Songwriters, and Producers* (Sept. 25, 2025) (newsroom.spotify.com/2025-09-25/spotify-strengthens-ai-protections/).

⁷⁷ *Id.*; *Spotify Removes 75m Spam Tracks in Past Year as AI Increases Ability to Make Fake Music*, The Guardian (Sept. 25, 2025) (www.theguardian.com/music/2025/sep/25/spotify-removes-75m-spam-tracks-past-year-ai-increases-ability-make-fake-music). In April 2026, *Billboard* reported that “Spotify is in the early stages of giving artists a tool to disclose how generative AI was used in the creation of their music,” which “is part of what was first promised in September 2025.” *Spotify Launches AI Credits; Artists Can Now Disclose Tech’s Use in Their Songs*, *Billboard* (Apr. 22, 2026) (www.billboard.com/pro/spotify-launches-ai-credits-music/). The same month, the company introduced the “Verified by Spotify” badge to indicate that an artist has consistent listener activity and engagement over time, good standing with Spotify’s platform policies, and signals of “a real artist represented in the profile.” *Spotify: Introducing Verified by Spotify, a Signal of Authenticity and Trust for the Artists Behind the Music* (Apr. 30, 2026) (newsroom.spotify.com/2026-04-30/verified-by-spotify-badge-artist-details/). Spotify stated that “[a]t launch, profiles that appear to primarily represent AI-generated or AI-persona artists are not eligible for verification.” *Id.*

⁷⁸ Email from Spotify to Joint Economic Committee Minority Staff (Nov. 7, 2025).

⁷⁹ Email from Spotify to Joint Economic Committee Minority Staff (Apr. 29, 2026).

⁸⁰ *Id.*

⁸¹ See, e.g., *We Found 200 ‘Podcasts’ Peddling Opioids. Now Spotify Is Taking Them Down*, Business Insider (May 15, 2025) (www.businessinsider.com/spotify-takes-down-podcasts-peddling-drugs-opioids-2025-5).

⁸² See Email from Joint Economic Committee Minority Staff to Spotify (July 22, 2025); *This Website Has Been Seized* (www.opioidstores.com) (screenshot on file with Committee). Spotify apparently removed the podcast featuring the link to “opioidstores.com” at some point after July 22, 2025 (screenshot on file with Committee).

⁸³ Email from Spotify to Joint Economic Committee Minority Staff (Jan. 16, 2026).

⁸⁴ Email from Spotify to Joint Economic Committee Minority Staff (Apr. 29, 2026).

⁸⁵ Snap, *Combating Illicit Drugs: The Fentanyl Public Health Crisis* (values.snap.com/safety/combating-illicit-drugs) (accessed Nov. 14, 2025).

⁸⁶ Snap, *Transparency Report – California* (Mar. 26, 2026) (values.snap.com/privacy/transparency/california-transparency-page) (accessed Apr. 29, 2026).

⁸⁷ Meta, *Our Approach to Illicit Drugs and Supporting Communities in the Face of the Opioid Epidemic* (Oct. 15, 2024) (transparency.meta.com/en-us/features/supporting-communities-opioid-epidemic).

⁸⁸ Email from Spotify to Joint Economic Committee Minority Staff (Apr. 29, 2026).

⁸⁹ Letter from Spotify to Ranking Member Hassan (Aug. 29, 2025).

⁹⁰ *Id.*

⁹¹ Spotify, Briefing with the Joint Economic Committee Minority Staff (July 10, 2025).

⁹² *Spotify Tightens AI Policy and Trims Catalog*, Forbes (Sept. 29, 2025) (www.forbes.com/sites/billrosenblatt/2025/09/26/spotify-tightens-ai-policy-and-trims-catalog/).

⁹³ Spotify, *Spotify Strengthens AI Protections for Artists, Songwriters, and Producers* (Sept. 25, 2025) (newsroom.spotify.com/2025-09-25/spotify-strengthens-ai-protections/).

⁹⁴ Spotify, Responses to Joint Economic Committee Minority Staff (Apr. 13, 2026).

⁹⁵ *Id.*

⁹⁶ *‘Guaranteed Human’: Audio Giant iHeartMedia Says Real People, Not AI Personalities, Are At the Controls*, Los Angeles Times (Nov. 25, 2025) (www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/business/story/2025-11-25/iheartradio-ai-djs-guaranteed-human-what-it-means).

⁹⁷ Screenshots and links on file with the Committee.

⁹⁸ Screenshots and links on file with the Committee. The single episode in the “Buy Xanax Pills Online” podcast shows an upload date of December 3, 2024. All episodes in the “Alprazolab” podcast series show an upload date of November 7, 2021.

⁹⁹ Screenshots and links on file with the Committee. All episodes in the “Alprazolab” podcast series on Amazon Music show an upload date of November 8, 2021. All episodes in the “Alprazolab” podcast series on Podchaser show the same upload date.

¹⁰⁰ Spotify, Responses to Joint Economic Committee Minority Staff (Apr. 13, 2026).