

MARK DeSAULNIER
11TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND
THE WORKFORCE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND
WORKFORCE TRAINING
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WORKFORCE PROTECTIONS

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
GOVERNMENT REFORM

SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC ASSETS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE, BENEFITS, AND
ADMINISTRATIVE RULES

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

327 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
PHONE: (202) 225-2095
FAX: (202) 225-5609

101 YGNACIO VALLEY ROAD, SUITE 210
WALNUT CREEK, CA 94596
PHONE: (925) 933-2660
FAX: (925) 933-2677

440 CIVIC CENTER PLAZA, 2ND FLOOR
RICHMOND, CA 94804
PHONE: (510) 620-1000
FAX: (510) 620-1005

February 1, 2018

The Honorable Trey Gowdy
Chairman
House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Gowdy:

Recent reports in the *New York Times* depict a troubling practice of corporations selling fake social media accounts, often spoofed off of real, unknowing users. I request that you hold a hearing to investigate their possible influence on the 2016 Presidential election, and invite representatives of companies who sell these accounts to testify.

According to the *New York Times*, companies like Devumi have made millions of dollars selling fake accounts to "social media influencers" looking to spread their reach. Influencers, ranging from celebrity chefs to sports stars, pay thousands of dollars to amass hundreds of thousands of "followers," the majority of which are now known to be bots.¹

Although seemingly innocuous, this practice can be dangerous. Bot accounts can spread false information for deceptive purposes, such as altering public opinion to sway elections, with superhuman veracity. It is essential that we understand how companies like Devumi operate in order to prevent these bot accounts from destabilizing the public's trust in our nation's elections and undermining our national security.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I am available to discuss the need for a hearing on this essential topic at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress

CC: Rep. Elijah Cummings, Ranking Member, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/01/27/technology/social-media-bots.html>