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## **A Shabbat Message from Rabbi Arthur Weiner**

Friday March 15, 2024 ~ Parsha: Pekudei

Dear JCCP/CBT family,

### **Time's Up for TikTok**

TikTok is a real problem. It represents a serious threat to our national security. That's the reason why the government prohibited the use of the app on devices owned by the federal government 15 months ago. That is why American allies like Canada, the European Union, England, Australia, Taiwan, India and other nations have either banned or restricted the use of this platform in the countries. Yesterday, the House of Representatives passed the [\*Protecting Americans From Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act\*](#) by a whopping 352-65 vote. Last week, it was referred out of the House Commerce and Energy Committee by a vote of 50-0. President Biden has promised to sign this into law if it reaches his desk. I can't remember when such an important issue was met with such bipartisan agreement.

This is not the forum for me to weigh in on the national security implications of this bill. For those who read my messages regularly, you know that I am particularly concerned with the influence of nations like China, Russia and Iran on our political life and their ability to insert disinformation throughout our media, especially our social media platforms. Already FBI has warned of this threat to the next national elections. But as a Rabbi and Jewish communal leader, I want to make our community aware of the great danger that TikTok represents to world Jewry. Amidst the funny, cute and comedic videos so beloved by users of TikTok is a cesspool of antisemitic content. That is why the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) is leading an effort to support the full passage in the Senate of the bill approved by the

House yesterday. As the JFNA has written, "social media is a major driver of the rise of anti-Semitism and TikTok is the worst offender by far".

I want you to understand more about this issue and the threat that TikTok actually represents to both the American Jewish community and world Jewry. Please see the following letter from JFNA explaining more about the issue, why it has added its name and prestige to the effort to see it pass the Senate, and how you can contact your elected officials to encourage them to vote for this historic legislation.

This is important. TikTok is dangerous. I thank you in advance for your support of this project.

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On Wednesday, March 13th, the Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act passed the House of Representatives with broad bipartisan support, in a resounding 352-65 vote. The Jewish Federations of North America are supporting the full passage of this bill to help address the proliferation of blatantly antisemitic content on social media, specifically on TikTok. It is time to urge our Senators to build upon this momentum and pass this bill.

The historic rise in antisemitism has been documented both by the federal governments which showed FBI Hate Crime data reaching "historic levels" last year, and the ADL, which tracks a 336% rise since the Hamas terror attacks on Israel of October 7<sup>th</sup>.

We are particularly sickened and outraged by the impact that antisemitism is having on our children on college campuses and increasingly in primary and secondary education as well. Each of you, together with many members of Congress, have spoken out against this development.

We also know that social media is a major driver of the rise in antisemitism and that TikTok is the worst offender by far. Recently, TikTok's governmental affairs advisor in Israel [resigned](#) from the company in protest of the app's overt bias and sympathy to terror with regard to the events of October 7<sup>th</sup>.

**In just one year, antisemitic comments on TikTok rose 912%.** This rhetoric, flooding onto the phones of Americans, is a major driver of the rise in antisemitism. **Now is the time for action. Now is the time for leadership.**

It is vital that you reach out to your elected officials in the Senate and urge them to support this bill. We need you to reach out and express how important this issue is for the Jewish community, and to highlight the urgency behind addressing this issue. There is no one answer to the rise in antisemitism, but Congress must act when it can – and this bill is a very important step that Congress can take today. **A vote for the Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act is a vote against antisemitism.**

**You may reach out to your elected officials at the following [link](#)**

Please share this call to action with your friends and family and have them reach out to their Senators. We are counting on you to help build broad bipartisan support and to help pass this bill.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Arthur D. Weiner