



July 29, 2020

The Honorable David Cicilline  
Chair, Subcommittee on Antitrust,  
Commercial, and Administrative Law  
Committee on the Judiciary  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2138 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable James Sensenbrenner  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Antitrust,  
Commercial, and Administrative Law  
Committee on the Judiciary  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2142 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler  
Chair, Committee on the Judiciary  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2138 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jim Jordan  
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2142 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Letter for the Record, July 29, 2020, Hearing on “Online Platforms and Market Power, Part 6: Examining the Dominance of Amazon, Apple, Facebook, and Google”

Dear Chairman Cicilline and Ranking Member Sensenbrenner,

TikTok strongly supports a competitive marketplace, particularly in the digital space. Choice benefits everyone -- it leads to better products and services, and greater innovation. TikTok commends the Committee and Subcommittee for its focus on these important issues.

### Our Company

Our mission at TikTok is to inspire creativity and bring joy. TikTok is a global platform for users to express their ideas by sharing short videos with a broader community. TikTok is available in over 150 markets and nearly 50 languages. TikTok is not offered in China. Hundreds of millions of people globally rely upon the platform every day to express themselves creatively, share their talent, enjoy entertaining content, and engage with a diverse and global community.

There is a lot of confusion and misconceptions about our company and the TikTok app. Most of our investors are global institutional venture funds such as General Atlantic, KKR, Sequoia, Softbank, Coatue, Fidelity, Goldman Sachs, and New Enterprise Associates. In the United States, TikTok is led by a strong and empowered team, comprised of hundreds of employees in Washington State, California, New York, Texas, Illinois, Florida, and Washington, D.C. We recently announced our plans to expand our workforce in the US by adding an additional 10,000 employees over the next three years. The TikTok mobile application is distributed in the US by TikTok, Inc., a US company that is a part of ByteDance Ltd., a global technology company. ByteDance has a global board, including Bill Ford of General Atlantic, Arthur Dantchik of Susquehanna International Group, Philippe Laffont of

Coatue, Neil Shen of Sequoia, and the company's founder Yiming Zhang. Additionally, TikTok CEO & ByteDance COO Kevin Mayer, a 23-year Disney veteran, is based out of our Los Angeles office.

Since its launch, TikTok has experienced exponential growth, and we continue to build out key teams in the United States to focus on product operations, legal affairs, policy and communications, trust and safety, sales, marketing and business development, creator partnerships, and music operations.

### Misconceptions About TikTok

We recognize that with success and growth comes scrutiny and accountability. TikTok has been actively engaging with Congress and other key stakeholders to tell our story, explain our commitment to safety and security, and address questions and concerns. We have a talented and experienced US team to keep our users' data safe and protect their privacy. And we are defending ourselves against cyber threats under the leadership of a world-class security head who has decades of US military and law enforcement experience.

Despite these efforts, rumors and misinformation about TikTok proliferate throughout Washington and in the media. We would like to take this opportunity to set the record straight. TikTok is not available in China. We store Americans' user data in the US, with back-up in Singapore, with strict access controls for employees. We have never provided any US user data to the Chinese government, nor would we do so if asked. Any allegations to the contrary are unfounded.

Allegations regarding TikTok as a national security threat are also unfounded. But don't just take our word for it -- experts around the world agree.

- Jim Lewis, a cybersecurity expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, rightly points out that Chinese intelligence services would have no use for the information on TikTok, even if they got a hold of it. "It's right to be suspicious of the Chinese but I'm not sure TikTok is a good intelligence tool for them."
- Joseph Steinberg, a cybersecurity expert and author of *Cybersecurity for Dummies*, said, "the reality is that the type of data that Facebook gathers likely gives it far more detailed intelligence about its users than TikTok ever could assemble with its current platform."
- Daniel Castro, a vice president at ITIF, has noted that "TikTok has stated clearly and unambiguously that it has not and will not provide U.S. user data to the Chinese government. If the U.S. government has evidence to the contrary, it should share this information with lawmakers and the public. Similarly, if the app is not complying with U.S. data privacy or other laws, regulators should hold it accountable for any violations." Castro also said that the punishment by the United States of foreign tech firms based on "rumors and innuendo" sets a precedent for other countries to retaliate and freely "impose trade restrictions on digital goods and services for vague and undefined national security threats."
- Across government and the private sector, we must do better to build up our cyber defenses, but as Tae Kim, a technology columnist for Bloomberg wrote, "On a relative basis, TikTok isn't an obvious target in terms of data collection. Its focus is sharing creative short-form videos, like dancing and lip-syncing. The app's algorithm surfaces relevant content, using metrics like how many similar videos you watched. And compared to an app like Facebook, TikTok doesn't require a large amount of data entry."

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The TikTok team is working to do our part to provide an outlet for creativity and fun entertainment, while protecting user safety and privacy. We are confident that TikTok will continue to give creators, users, and brands an entertaining outlet for many years to come, and we will take the necessary steps to make this happen. But ultimately, this is not just about the success of TikTok. It is about a competitive marketplace that provides people with choices on how to spend their time online.

Without TikTok, all that users would be left with is copycats offered by the same players who already dominate the online landscape. Gone with the competition, would also be the creative energy, fun, and innovation that people love and people find on TikTok.

Attached to this letter, for inclusion in the Hearing record, is a copy of a blog post by TikTok CEO & Bytedance COO, Kevin Mayer. Thank you for the opportunity to address these important issues and to provide more information on our company and our mission. Should the Committee have any questions for TikTok, we welcome the opportunity to speak with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MB', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael Beckerman  
Vice President, Head of US Public Policy

cc: Congressional Leadership

Attachment: Blog Post by Kevin Mayer, CEO, TikTok

# Fair competition and transparency benefits us all

*By Kevin Mayer, CEO, TikTok*

*July 29, 2020*

Innovation is one of the defining characteristics of a competitive market. The introduction of a successful new product fuels growth and dynamism in any industry. It is unfortunate for creators, brands, and the broader community that it has been years since a company came along and reimagined what a social entertainment platform could be. But TikTok did just that.

TikTok brought a unique and intuitive interface. It gave creators easy, powerful tools. It also encouraged the formation of inclusive and meaningful communities. In short, TikTok brought successful competition to the marketplace. This is why I joined the company as CEO earlier this year: to help lead the next generation of creators to connect with their newly energized audience, while bringing fun entertainment to people's lives.

TikTok has become the place where new music is discovered and explodes onto the scene, such as Lil Nas X's "Old Town Road." During the pandemic, we saw the resonance of Curtis Roach, whose "Bored in the House" mantra became an anthem for putting a positive spin on tough times and helped people better cope with the lockdowns. And best of all, we witnessed many examples of families coming together to perform multi-generational song and dance, which warmed all of our hearts.

With our success comes responsibility and accountability. The entire industry has received scrutiny, and rightly so. Yet, we have received even more scrutiny due to the company's Chinese origins. We accept this and embrace the challenge of giving peace of mind through greater transparency and accountability. We believe it is essential to show users, advertisers, creators, and regulators that we are responsible and committed members of the American community that follows US laws.

Even more, we believe our entire industry should be held to an exceptionally high standard. That's why we believe all companies should disclose their algorithms, moderation policies, and data flows to regulators. We will not wait for regulation to come, but instead TikTok has taken the first step by launching a Transparency and Accountability Center for moderation and data practices. Experts can observe our moderation policies in real-time, as well as examine the actual code that drives our algorithms. This puts us a step ahead of the industry, and we encourage others to follow suit.

Beyond our commitment to accountability, we also believe all players in the industry should make a positive impact in the community. Our \$200 million Creator Fund will help American creators get the most out of TikTok, and we expect that this will grow to over \$1 billion in the US in the next 3 years, and more than double that globally. In addition to supporting these creative entrepreneurs, we are also on track to create 10,000 new TikTok jobs across the US.

At TikTok we welcome competition. We think fair competition makes all of us better. To those who wish to launch competitive products, we say bring it on. Facebook is even launching another copycat product, Reels (tied to Instagram), after their other copycat Lasso failed quickly. But let's focus our energies on fair and open competition in service of our consumers, rather than maligning attacks by our competitor – namely Facebook – disguised as patriotism and designed to put an end to our very presence in the US.

Without TikTok, American advertisers would again be left with few choices. Competition would dry up and so too will an outlet for America's creative energy. We are not political, we do not accept political advertising and have no agenda – our only objective is to remain a vibrant, dynamic platform for everyone to enjoy. Consumers can only benefit from the growth of healthy, successful platforms like TikTok and we will fight to continue to give American creators, users and brands an entertaining outlet for many years to come.

We are willing to take all necessary steps to ensure the long-term availability and success of TikTok. The one thing that will not change is our commitment to ensuring

that TikTok remains a safe and secure platform for the tens of millions of American families that derive joy from it.

For our skeptics, I am confident we have the answers and where we do not, we will improve. The onus is on us to step up. We are doing so, and will continue to take the bold steps needed. I accept and appreciate the challenge.

TikTok has become the latest target, but we are not the enemy. The bigger move is to use this moment to drive deeper conversations around algorithms, transparency, and content moderation, and to develop stricter rules of the road. We are taking the first step of many to address these concerns, and call on the industry to follow our lead for the benefit of users and creators everywhere.