

August 12, 2020

Mr. Sundar Pichai
Chief Executive Officer
Alphabet Inc.
Mountain View, Calif., 94043

Dear Mr. Pichai,

We represent some of the leading philanthropic organizations in the country. We write to you today to raise our serious concerns about the way Google sells and displays advertising.

Privacy advocates around the world have raised the alarm about unacceptable violations related to the way Google sells advertising space. We share their concerns: the system is broken. It routinely violates the basic privacy rights of users. Reform is needed.

A new report by the [Global Disinformation Index](#), a U.K.-based nonprofit that works with governments, business, and civil society to disrupt and defund disinformation sites, chronicles many examples of the damage Google AdSense can do. Charities, which depend on online advertising for donations to keep the lights on and serve their constituencies, have their ads placed on websites that openly spread hate speech, promote dangerous falsehoods about the spread and prevention of COVID-19, and even encourage violence. All the while, Google pockets the fees.

In too many cases, this means the charities are paying Google, only for Google to damage their reputation and undermine their mission. Few nonprofit organizations have the luxury of hiring marketing specialists or global ad agencies to help them navigate the currents of the online advertising world. While we appreciate that Google may offer some benefits to small charitable groups in the form of reduced costs for ads, your ad placement model forces them to try to police where Google might place their names—something most of them have neither the resources nor the experience to handle.

Social media platforms can and must do better. Facebook, as you know, is facing a major boycott from advertisers who are increasingly outraged over that company's failure to change its policy on hate speech. Left unaddressed, this scourge not only serves to further divide our already highly polarized society, it can literally put lives at risk.

Google has an opportunity to lead the way by designing an advertising placement model that respects advertisers and does not put them into unwanted and damaging associations that undermine their good works and values. Google has the resources and capacity to make a better product, without these design flaws and harmful consequences to charities and the communities they serve.

We urge you to act now to put principle over profit and end this harmful practice.

Sincerely,

Darren Walker, Ford Foundation

Ed Henry, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation

Ellen Dorsey, Wallace Global Fund
Joe Goldman, Democracy Fund
Joseph Zimlich, Bohemian Foundation
Larry Kramer, Hewlett Foundation
Lee Bodner, New Venture Fund
Lee Wasserman, Rockefeller Family Fund
Mark Surman, Mozilla Foundation
Mike Kubzansky, Omidyar Network
Patricia Bauman and Gary D. Bass, Bauman Foundation
Patrick Gaspard, Open Society Foundations
Dr. Rajiv Shah, Rockefeller Foundation
Rey Ramsey, Nathan Cummings Foundation
Ridgway White, C.S. Mott Foundation
Stephen Heintz, Rockefeller Brothers Fund
Stephen King, Luminare
Steve Daetz, Sandler Foundation