March 5, 2019

Chairwoman Janice D. Schakowsky and Ranking Member Cathy McMorris Rodgers
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection & Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Hearing on "Inclusion in Tech: How Diversity Benefits All Americans"

Dear Chairwoman Schakowsky and Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers:

Internet Association (IA) welcomes the opportunity to submit this letter for the record regarding the committee's March 6 hearing entitled "Inclusion in Tech: How Diversity Benefits All Americans." IA is the only trade association that exclusively represents leading global internet companies on matters of public policy.

Our mission is to foster innovation, promote economic growth, and empower people through the free and open internet. We believe the internet creates unprecedented benefits for society and the economy, and as the voice of the world's leading internet companies, IA works to ensure that legislators, consumers, and other stakeholders understand these benefits.

IA member companies recognize the importance of improving the diversity of their workforces to better reflect the internet community and society at large. IA members understand that companies with diverse workforces perform more effectively and create more innovative products. A diverse workforce is both a financial and moral imperative.

IA treats diversity and inclusion efforts with the same importance as other policy areas. IA created the role of director of diversity and inclusion policy to assist IA members in engaging with relevant stakeholders, identifying best practices, and creating an industry-wide understanding of the problem and potential solutions. The role also takes a holistic approach to policy, examining its impact on communities of color and communities underrepresented in tech.

Tech companies face a pipeline issue for talent in STEM generally, but it is especially exacerbated for diverse talent. The industry recognizes it must improve the diversity of its workforce and has invested time, money, and people in addressing this issue.

Many internet companies hold themselves accountable by tracking metrics related to workforce diversity, releasing annual reports on diversity and inclusion, and setting goals for the future. The industry has recognized it needs to diversify its workforce and has begun to take the steps to do so. It is also free from the long history of exclusionary practices that mark many traditional American industries like law and finance. It does face challenges, however, because of its geographic concentration. As it has grown, the industry has directly addressed the issue.

The internet industry is also not immune to the impact of the legacy of discrimination in this country or around the world. One of the focuses of this hearing is potential bias in consumer products, which use

algorithms. Bias is largely determined by the type of data and biases in datasets that reflect societal biases. Therefore, it is critical that companies use diverse datasets that are tested for potential bias.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the algorithms that fuel AI are not new technologies, but we are at the beginning of a critical turning point. The combination of large amounts of data and increased computing power has made AI more powerful than in previous decades. AI has the potential to have an enormous, positive impact on human society in areas like healthcare, transportation, education, and beyond. However, datasets that contain historical bias risk perpetuating that bias.

IA members value consumer trust and are dedicated to creating products free of bias. Many IA members use some or all of the following practices to eliminate or monitor any potential bias in products:

- Ensure an appropriate level of oversight by having humans review and work with AI and employing ethicists to monitor AI for signs of bias.
- Promote diversity internally by recruiting, developing, and retaining diverse talent and placing AI research centers in underrepresented parts of the world.
- Catch bias early in project planning by having diverse talent manage AI projects.
- Train algorithms with unbiased data by drawing from sufficiently diverse sources and teaching employees to remove bias from data.
- Review algorithm output for bias by auditing output and making it explainable.
- Develop best practices for inclusive AI by establishing industry working groups such as the Partnership on AI.

Access to larger datasets also helps combat bias. Laws like the Open, Public, Electronic, and Necessary (OPEN) Government Data Act, which allows access to government data in a machine-readable format, help to better train systems and assist in reducing bias.

IA supports these efforts as well as efforts to create public-private groups to study these emerging technologies. The benefits of this technology are just being fully understood and policymakers and companies need to ensure unbiased products without stifling innovation.

We look forward to working with the Committee as it examines this complex issue. The industry is committed to a workforce that resembles its users and to creating products that are fair to everyone.

Sincerely,
/s/ Sean Perryman
Sean Perryman
Director of Diversity and Inclusion Policy & Counsel
Internet Association