



June 10, 2019

The Honorable David N. Cicilline
Chairman
Subcommittee on Antitrust,
Commercial and Administrative Law
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable F. James Sensenbrenner
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Antitrust,
Commercial and Administrative Law
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cicilline and Ranking Member Sensenbrenner:

Consumer Reports is pleased that the Subcommittee is embarking on this examination of the threats posed to our marketplace and to our society by the growing power of giant online platforms over commerce and communications.

A handful of big tech corporations have come to dominate the online marketplace, shaping what we buy and how we communicate. While they bring benefits, their market power, and their increasingly pervasive reach into all aspects of our interactions, threaten to restrict and diminish our choices, and the pathways for all who seek to reach us – including manufacturers, service providers, content creators, and other voices. At the same time, they have unprecedented insight into our everyday lives, and are tailoring ads and information through opaque and unaccountable artificial intelligence systems.

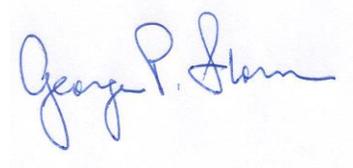
To restore a balance of power and control to consumers in the marketplace, we must ensure that the power of these corporations is reined in where it is being abused. Not just tech giants like Facebook, Google, Amazon, and Apple, but likewise internet service providers who control our online access and also face few – if any – competitors who can offer alternatives. Vigorous antitrust enforcement needs to play a key role, along with strong privacy laws and other consumer protections.

Over the years, our antitrust laws have been instrumental in keeping our marketplace open and vibrant. On several occasions, Congress has found it necessary to strengthen those laws to better ensure their continued effectiveness. This may prove to be another such occasion. Meanwhile, a renewed commitment to ensuring that the existing laws are vigorously enforced is needed, along with substantial additional resources for strapped enforcers.

Ultimately, all options need to be considered, both antitrust enforcement and additional measures. In the competition policy realm, those measures might be something relatively simple, like requiring interoperability among platforms; or they might be more far-reaching, like regulating aspects of platform operations like common carriers, potentially even separating ownership and control of the platform from using it to compete in providing products and services.

Your Subcommittee's investigation is an important and welcome catalyst to this effort. We look forward to working with you to ensure that the antitrust laws can and will continue to play their essential part in making the marketplace work for consumers, and for everyone.

Sincerely,



George Slover
Senior Policy Counsel
Consumer Reports



Justin Brookman
Director, Privacy and
Technology Policy
Consumer Reports



Jonathan Schwantes
Senior Policy Counsel
Consumer Reports

cc: Members, Subcommittee on Antitrust, Commercial and Administrative Law