



Connected Commerce Council

July 21, 2020

The Honorable David Cicilline
U.S. House of Representatives
2233 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jim Sensenbrenner
U.S. House of Representatives
2449 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Cicilline and Ranking Member Sensenbrenner:

Next week, the Subcommittee on Antitrust, Commercial and Administrative Law will hold its most important hearing this Congress when you hear testimony from the Chief Executive Officers of four leading online platforms. This hearing is especially crucial to the Connected Commerce Council (3C) and our more than 10,000 small business members nationally, as our mission is to promote and optimize small businesses' adoption of digital technologies and tools. We chose this mission deliberately because data incontrovertibly demonstrates that small business owners who invest in digital technologies are more successful, as they generate more revenue, hire more people, and are much more likely to survive today's pandemic economy.

The story of "Online Platforms and Market Power" is not only about big companies competing against each other, or about big companies competing against slightly less big companies. It is also about online platforms and technologies offering low-cost and free digital tools that power small businesses in every city and state. These services and tools help small businesses compete and win against chain stores and restaurants and even against large online retailers that collectively for several decades have nearly destroyed America's downtowns. 3C members exemplify the millions of small businesses that use online platforms to create, market, and operate their businesses more efficiently and more profitably than ever before. They are an essential story of digital competition; they deserve to be heard by the Subcommittee.

As the Subcommittee finalizes the witness list and considers future hearings about online platforms and market power, 3C and our small business members urge you to consider online platforms' promotion of small businesses. Do not be misled into thinking that only large companies and competition between platforms matters, or that individual consumers are the only relevant consumers. Small businesses are also consumers, and they benefit by robust competition between Facebook and Google for advertising dollars; between Etsy, Shopify, and Amazon as commerce platforms; and between Intuit and Gusto as accounting and human resources platforms.

America is facing a once-a-century economic and public health crisis that has particularly hurt small businesses. One of the few small business bright spots has been the ability of many to operate online, powered by the digital tools and services offered by the very companies you have invited to testify. In fact, according to research 3C recently commissioned, 30% of small businesses would have shut down all or part of their business during the crisis if they did not have access to digital tools.

Small businesses cannot afford to be the collateral damage in a short-sighted battle between Congress and “Big Tech.” I know that is not your goal; I hope it is not the result.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jake Ward". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jake" being more prominent than the last name "Ward".

Jake Ward
President
Connected Commerce Council

cc:

Members, Subcommittee on Antitrust, Commercial and Administrative Law

The Honorable Hank Johnson
The Honorable Jamie Raskin
The Honorable Pramila Jayapal
The Honorable Val Demings
The Honorable Mary Gay Scanlon
The Honorable Joe Neguse
The Honorable Lucy McBath
The Honorable Ken Buck
The Honorable Matt Gaetz
The Honorable Kelly Armstrong
The Honorable Greg Steube