



**National
Urban League**

*Empowering Communities.
Changing Lives.*

March 6, 2019

Honorable Janice D. Schakowsky
Chair
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection
and Commerce
Committee on Energy & Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Cathy M. Rodgers
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection
and Commerce
Committee on Energy & Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Schakowsky and Ranking Member Rodgers:

As President and CEO of the National Urban League, and on behalf of its 90 affiliates in 36 states and the District of Columbia, thank you for holding this important hearing on “Diversity and Inclusion in Tech.” The National Urban League approaches this issue from the lens of inclusion and equity. Technology is where the jobs of the future are. And technology already has become the primary means through which Americans receive critical services. These services, including social media, education, banking, and healthcare to name a few, are indispensable to economic independence for African American and other communities of color. The National Urban League remains vigilant against our communities being left behind as technology marches relentlessly forward.

It is no secret that the tech industry’s history of diversity and inclusion is abysmal. The latest EEO reports filed by Google, Facebook and Twitter show a combined workforce of 41,000 people, where only 1.8 percent were black. This gross marginalization continues to take place, despite African Americans continuing to be avid consumers of digital technology, and over-indexing in social media use. As I stated in the National Urban League’s 2018 State of Black America (SOBA) Report, “C-suite executives continuously espouse the gospel of racial and gender diversity and inclusion, but these spaces do not reflect our nations demographic diversity.”¹ Technology and how it will include communities of color is so important that the National Urban League, dedicated its entire 2018 SOBA report to this matter, titling the report, “Powering the Digital Revolution.” In addition to taking an in-depth look into the state of diversity and inclusion within the tech industry, we went further, but creating a Digital Inclusion Index, to directly measure the extent to which black Americans are being – or as it is, are not, afforded new opportunities in the digital space.

The impact of the tech industry’s failure to get serious about diversity goes far beyond lost opportunities for wealth building in African American communities. The lack of inclusion has spilled over into other areas of American society. Without diversity in these companies, no one has sounded alarm bells about the advertising policies of internet platforms, and how they are being used by bad actors to target or exclude African Americans and other historically marginalized communities from the ballot box, affordable housing, and economic opportunity. Without diversity in these companies, algorithms have been designed that create false positives that identify persons with darker complexions as criminals.

¹ Marc H. Morial, “From the President’s Desk,” Powering the Digital Revolution, State of Black America 2018, 2018, <http://soba.iamempowered.com/2018-report>

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The National Urban League has consistently pressed tech companies to implement meaningful diversity and inclusion policies and has served as a resource to effectuate the changes that must take hold. I have the honor of serving on the Federal Communications Commission's Advisory Committee on Diversity and Digital Empowerment, where I chair a working group of dedicated diversity and inclusion experts who are seeking to provide the industry with best practices, tailored to the tech industry. The National Urban League also works with tech companies to provide guidance on how various policies or products may impact communities of color. We have provided strategic advice in closed door meetings and in coalition with other civil rights and social justice stakeholder groups.

While tech companies have begun to take small steps to address diversity and inclusion, we must continue to demand they do more. This is why we are grateful that you are holding a hearing on this important issue, and we ask that you continue to hold the tech industry to task. Diversity and inclusion are a social good and a business imperative. American competitiveness and standing the world are better when all Americans are included in the workforce.

On behalf of the National Urban League and the more than 2 million Americans we represent, I thank you and look forward to working with your subcommittee and Congress on diversity and inclusion and the many other issues facing the technology industry.

Very truly yours,



Marc H. Morial
President and Chief Executive Officer
National Urban League