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November 2, 2016

Travis Kalanick
Chief Executive Officer
Uber Technologies, Inc.
1455 Market Street
San Francisco, CA 94103

Logan Green
Chief Executive Officer
Lyft, Inc.
185 Berry Street, Suite 5000
San Francisco, CA 94107

Dear Mr. Kalanick and Mr. Green:

I am writing in regard to a new study documenting discrimination in the ride-hailing industry.¹ For many Americans, discrimination in transportation services is not an unfamiliar problem, nor is it an issue unique to ride-hailing apps. Regrettably, African Americans and other racial minorities have long experienced discrimination when attempting to hail a taxi directly from the curb, with cabs either driving past African-American customers or refusing to accept passengers traveling to certain neighborhoods. Ride-hailing apps like Uber and Lyft have the potential to offer consumers relief from discrimination and destination bias, and have already shown great promise by increasing travel options within underserved neighborhoods. But as app-based driving services reshape the transportation industry, it is essential that companies ensure technology does not give cover to bias, whether intentional or unconscious.

I applaud both of your companies for adopting policies expressly prohibiting discrimination in the provision of services.² However, as demonstrated by the study from the National Bureau of Economic Research, the ride-hailing industry can take proactive steps to eliminate the opportunity for drivers to engage in discriminatory conduct. The study, based on approximately 1,500 Uber and Lyft rides in Boston and Seattle, found that African-American travelers seeking to use your companies' services faced significantly longer wait times to get paired with drivers, and that drivers canceled ride requests for people with African-American-sounding names more than twice as often as travelers whose names drivers believed to sound white. The researchers also found that drivers took women on significantly longer rides than male passengers, noting that, disturbingly, the additional travel "appears to be a combination of profiteering and flirting to a captive audience."

New and emerging technologies have the potential to break down barriers, but we must work to ensure that these advances expand the horizons of *all* Americans. As the study

¹ Yanbo Ge, Christopher R. Knittel, Don MacKenzie & Stephen Zoepf, *Racial and Gender Discrimination in Transportation Network Companies* (Nat'l Bureau of Econ. Research, Working Paper No. 22776, 2016), available at <http://www.nber.org/papers/w22776>.

² See Uber, Non-Discrimination Policy, <https://www.uber.com/legal/other/non-discrimination-policy/> (last visited Nov. 2, 2016); Lyft, Anti-Discrimination Policies, <https://help.lyft.com/hc/en-us/articles/214218517-Anti-Discrimination-Policies> (last visited Nov. 2, 2016).

demonstrates, more can be done to guard against discriminatory behavior. In light of the study's troubling findings, I would like to better understand your companies' efforts to address discrimination through platform design and other measures. I respectfully request that you address the following questions:

1. In order to guard against discrimination in the process of accepting ride requests, to the extent that your company allows drivers to view photographs of travelers prior to accepting a ride request, is your company considering eliminating traveler photos? If not, why?
2. Similarly, in light of the study's findings that drivers have canceled ride requests on the basis of whether a traveler's name sounds as if it belongs to an African-American person, to the extent that your company allows drivers to view travelers' names in the course of accepting a ride request, is your company considering eliminating the use of names to identify passengers? Insofar as the performance of the app may require that you assign travelers a unique identifier, is your company contemplating assigning travelers an alphanumeric code in lieu of using names? If not, why?
3. Your companies' non-discrimination policies already prohibit discrimination against passengers on the basis of race and other characteristics, and provide that violations of those policies may result in drivers losing access to your platforms or having their accounts deactivated. What additional steps will you take to disincentivize drivers from canceling rides or engaging in other discriminatory behavior?
4. In order to detect discriminatory conduct and take steps to address it, do you collect data on driver behavior, such as wait times across passengers and the frequency of canceled rides? Does your company periodically audit driver behavior? If not, will you develop plans to better detect driver behavior that could signal discriminatory conduct, or adopt a practice of performing periodic audits?

I would appreciate responses to these questions no later than December 16, 2016. Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter, and please do not hesitate to contact me, or Nick Wunder on my staff, at (202) 224-5641.

Sincerely,



Senator Al Franken
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Privacy,
Technology, and the Law