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National Newspaper Publishers Association

BLACK PRESS OF AMERICA

February 1, 2022

The Honorable Joyce Beatty
Chairwoman
Congressional Black Caucus
2303 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC, 20515-3503

Dear Chairwoman Beatty and Esteemed Members of the Congressional Black Caucus:

First and foremost, I personally thank you and the Congressional Black Caucus for continuing to represent the best interests of Black America as we face new challenges and opportunities in 2022.

As I'm sure you are aware, your colleagues are considering major antitrust legislation to restrict the power of technology platforms and curb anti-competitive behavior. The effort is certainly well-intentioned. After all, competition is a crucial part of a thriving economy. But some of the proposed reforms go too far and could hamper the ability for Black and minority-owned small businesses and publishers to grow and thrive, especially as we navigate this pandemic.

As the President and CEO of the National Newspaper Publishers Association (NNPA), a gateway to nearly 230 regional and local Black newspapers with more than 30 million readers per week, I have serious concerns about the damage this antitrust legislation may do to our community. The NNPA's newspapers and information portals are small businesses that rely on digital tools to grow our readerships and increase our revenue. The antitrust legislation aimed at curbing tech companies may unintendedly silence the voices of Black community news, harming the small businesses we run and the communities we serve.

Business ownership is crucial for both individuals and the community. Unfortunately, ownership of businesses however is neither uniform nor equitable: Black Americans have never had an equal ability to reap the benefits of business ownership. There are no easy answers to the challenges that BIPOC-owned businesses face, but one thing is clear - America's BIPOC-owned businesses are better able to reach new customers and grow their companies when they have access to digital tools and services. Tech companies provide a wide range of products, services, and expertise that are used by local businesses to manage their

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operations, connect with customers, access distant markets, and expand their footprint both domestically and abroad. A recent [Connected Commerce Council report](#) shows that BIPOC-owned businesses were more likely to find digital tools helpful to their business than white-owned ones. Yet, as BIPOC businesses fight to stay afloat, antitrust legislation threatens to disrupt the ad-ecosystem that businesses rely on to thrive in today's economy.

For example, the “self-preferencing bill”, the American Innovation and Choice Act (AICOA), could prohibit search innovations such as crisis alerts, voting and COVID information, and minority-owned business listings. In the past year, Google innovated its Search product to allow people to search more easily for black-owned businesses and searches for black-owned businesses went up 600%. These are the kind of product innovations that a ban on self-preferencing could prohibit. Similarly, the bills could force Google to terminate support for tools that local small businesses use to connect to customers like Business Profiles on Google Search and Google Maps. Finally, as we learned in the midst of the pandemic, access to online marketplaces is essential to the lifeblood of communities. The bill's prohibitions could make it untenable for Amazon to promote Prime offers to Prime Members and ensure Prime meets its delivery promises.

The overbroad nature of tech legislation extends beyond the AICOA. Even bills like the [Journalism Competition Preservation Act \(JCPA\)](#), meant to protect publications like those in the National Newspaper Publishers Association, would ultimately weaken our ability to sustain our positions as pillars of the community, including our ability to collaborate with companies across industries to pioneer new programs that will help us tell our community's stories in new and exciting ways, and create a more sustainable future for our industry. For example, NNPA publishers who participated in the Google News Initiative's Ad Transformation Lab experienced on average a 25% increase in programmatic revenue as well as a 10% increase in traffic. The AFRO, the 129-year-old Black and family-owned Baltimore newspaper, has added more staff and continues to explore new ways to grow their revenue streams since participating in the program.

The news industry has reached an inflection point, and much work is still needed to secure a bright and sustainable future for minority-owned publications. Our community publications are better able to scale their reach, innovate and modernize their organizations, and create sustainable revenue with the help of digital tools and private sector partnerships. Legislation like the JCPA would only help larger newspapers, rather than smaller community publications like ours.

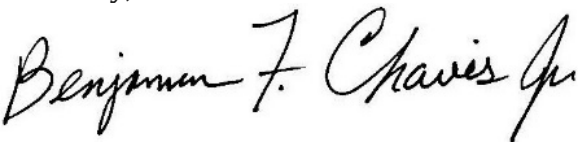
Minority-owned businesses are resilient but need to have the freedom to incorporate digital solutions and form their own private sector partnerships to make tremendous progress.

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Congress should not pass antitrust legislation that could undermine Black small businesses.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Benjamin F. Chavis Jr." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "B" and "F".

Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.
President & CEO
National Newspaper Publishers Association