



February 23, 2021

Members of the U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Members of the U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators and Representatives:

Consumer Reports has been a trusted voice for consumers across the nation for 85 years. With our 6 million strong community of members across the political spectrum, we remain an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit dedicated to advancing the needs, safety and rights of every consumer.

Americans come to Consumer Reports for honest, unbiased advice about the best -- and worst -- products and services. Our trusted recommendations are built on a foundation of rigorous testing, research, and reporting.

We are writing to urge you to take action this year to help build a fair and just marketplace for all consumers. We hope the recommendations outlined below will spur the much-needed actions consumers support.

Our unparalleled commitment to the needs of the American consumer is reflected in our decades of work with policymakers on both sides of the political aisle. We advocate for consumers in Washington, D.C., and statehouses, working for pro-consumer laws and better industry standards. We disrupt key sectors of the marketplace by working to forge strategic partnerships with a diverse group of stakeholders. And we engage with manufacturers and companies to make changes upstream to prevent harmful products and services from ever coming to market.

Our mission began with our founders, who saw grave challenges facing Americans after the Great Depression, including the patchwork of poorly-enforced laws that provided limited safeguards for consumers. Advertisers' dubious claims went unchecked, and people didn't have a reliable way to gauge the things they bought with their hard-earned money. These challenges led to the birth of CR.

Today in 2021, CR's mission is just as urgent. Together we can raise the bar for the safety of the cars we drive and the food we eat. We can shine a light on predatory lenders, deceptive ads, and hidden fees that have become so prevalent in today's marketplace. We can heed the

call from consumers to stop climate change and improve air quality. And with families depending on the internet more than ever during the pandemic, we know that every consumer must have access to the technology they need, with more control over the privacy of their information.

As you turn to important work to rebuild the economy, respond to the COVID-19 crisis and take on the many other challenges facing our country today, we want to share our knowledge, the rigorous research we continue to undertake and the compelling stories consumers are sharing with us about their challenges. **Together we can build toward a marketplace that puts the power back into the hands of the American people. This will require new protections and expanded oversight of the marketplace.**

In today's rapidly changing world, Consumer Reports is working hard and expanding our expertise in four key areas where consumers are hurting: digital rights, financial fairness, safety, and sustainability in the marketplace. Each of these requires attention and action from both Congress and the administration.

Digital Rights. *Consumers should be able to access a diverse and trustworthy internet ecosystem without having to worry that their personal information will be misused and abused.*

- Adopt a strong federal online privacy and data security law.
- Address the concentration of corporate power in digital markets by updating burden of proof presumptions and enacting new data portability and interoperability protections.
- Reform liability law to incentivize platforms to address bad faith abuses of their networks.
- Require transparency and fairness in algorithmic data processing.
- Dramatically expand broadband internet access and affordability.

Financial Fairness. *Consumers should be able to spend, save, and borrow with confidence, and without facing unfair, discriminatory, or predatory practices.*

- Provide relief to those financially impacted by the COVID-19 crisis so that they do not face long term financial consequences.
- Prohibit predatory lending practices by setting an interest rate cap on loans for all borrowers, and preserving states' ability to set more stringent caps in the future.
- Increase consumer control of their own financial lives by reforming credit reporting.
- Ensure that, as consumers' financial lives are increasingly digital, they do not face new, unexpected risks to their finances or to their privacy.
- Ban hidden and manipulative fees that increase costs and create confusion.

Safety. *Consumers should have confidence that the food they eat, the products they use, and the cars they drive are safe for themselves and their children.*

- To [cut road deaths in half](#) over the next 10-15 years – on the path toward zero fatalities – require all new cars to come equipped with existing lifesaving technology, and ensure NHTSA sets and enforces strong autonomous vehicle safety rules.
- Ban the use of PFAS chemicals in food packaging and establish a national drinking water standard for the most common PFAS.
- Enhance the abilities of the Food and Drug Administration and USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service to investigate root causes of food-borne illness outbreaks.
- Strengthen Consumer Product Safety Commission recalls, public disclosure, rulemaking, and enforcement, and pass the [STURDY Act](#) to save children’s lives.

Sustainability. *Consumers should have confidence that the products and services they use reduce their impact on public health and the environment.*

- Extend and make more equitable and available incentives and grants for the production, sale and use of sustainable consumer products and services: electric vehicles, charging and alternative fuel infrastructure, public transit, and renewable electricity.
- Expand consumer fuel choice by creating a strong, technology-neutral, low-carbon or clean fuels standard that would replace the current renewable fuel standard.

And given the new challenges consumers are facing, the federal consumer protection agencies must be up to the task. **It will be essential for entities such as the Federal Trade Commission, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to be better funded, staffed, and empowered.**

We look forward to working with you to grow a more productive, competitive and safer consumer-first economy. Our team of experts is available to work with you as you develop legislative proposals and explore ways to make government agencies more effective and relevant to the needs of consumers as they struggle with a changing digital landscape, the fairness of financial products and services, the very safety of their families and the importance of sustainability reflected in the choices they make in the marketplace.

We invite you and your relevant staff members to make use of **TrustCR.org** to learn more about how we can work together on behalf of consumers and to reach out directly to our Legislative Director, Anna Laitin at Anna.Laitin@Consumer.Org, or our Advocacy Vice President, David Friedman at David.Friedman@Consumer.Org.

Sincerely,



Marta L. Tellado
President & Chief Executive Officer