(put on your letterhead)

November XX, 2019

Dear Honorable Representative \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_:

I am a resident and voter of (your state) and part of the tourism industry that is critical to our state’s economy. The (your business name) is a small business and part of (your town’s) community.

Operating since (name the year), we have welcomed visitors to our hotel/inn/B&B. In the beginning, one could reach out to customers easily. Those days are gone. Today, I am reaching out regarding the metasearch practices of Google in the travel space.

Put Your Own Story Here

In March 2019, Google altered control over access to small businesses such as ours by changing how the platform’s search interface works in the travel space. It was labeled ‘March 2019 Core update’ by Google and contained several changes to the search results when looking for travel products, also known as the ‘4 pack’ and to the metasearch ad console.

With this change, my small business’ direct booking engine efforts are pushed to ‘below the fold’ and instead replaced by the metasearch results. The impact of this change means that Google is prioritizing an area where it makes money from the impressions and clicks within the metasearch box over my business’ direct booking engine. The result often misleads the consumer to the highest bidder instead of to my business. The financial resources to compete against the billions and billions of dollars that online travel companies such as Expedia and Booking.com have in order to appear in the metasearch box are simply not afforded to the many small businesses that make up our state’s tourism industry. This is far removed from an open marketplace.

It has come to the hotel industry’s attention – and therefore our attention - that Google is using its platform to place its paid product between the traveler and the hotelier. In essence, Google’s layout acts as a gatekeeper that the hotel must pay for its direct booking option to appear. It does not escape me that this letter is dated just after the November 14th, 2019 House Small Business Committee hearing discussing such issues.

In light of that hearing, I strongly urge you to:

* Support the Stop Online Booking Scams Act (HR3956/S2229). If you are not already a co-sponsor, please do so today.
* Urge continued review and action of Big Tech, especially Google, so that small businesses like mine can survive

When a large company with such tremendous market share as Google looks to undercut access by having one hand of its paid products ‘bump out’ a direct booking option, there are a number of anti-trust concerns raised. These concerns will only grow as screens get smaller with mobile bookings and perhaps disappear altogether with voice search. Then truly the small business will be at the mercy of what Google decides to show the end consumer.

Our state’s small businesses and innkeepers have a right to access to their customer on a level playing field.

I urge you to work diligently in Congress and with the FTC to help support our state’s important tourism industry and small businesses.

Thank you in advance for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,

Your Signature Information Here