

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 10, 2022

The Honorable James E. Clyburn
Chairman
Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Clyburn and Chairwoman Maloney:

We write to request that you hold a hearing to examine yet another incident of Big Tech silencing certain viewpoints in potentially unlawful ways. This time GoFundMe Inc. (GoFundMe) is selectively discriminating against certain people by cancelling their ability to organize funds through its crowdfunding platform. GoFundMe also attempted to defraud hard-working taxpayers of millions of dollars in donations received in support of an organization promoting individual freedom, by trying to divert that money away from them and instead funnel it to other unrelated causes. They only reversed course after investigations were launched by attorneys general in a number of states who exposed this attempted scheme.

In recent weeks, a protest movement led by Canadian truckers formed in Canada with the goal of protesting restrictive policies in Ottawa, including the fact that both the United States and Canada now require truckers crossing their borders to be vaccinated against COVID-19.¹ Around the globe, heads of Governments like Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and President Biden have curtailed their citizens' freedoms and imposed harsh liberty-restricting policies under the guise of combatting the spread of COVID-19. These politicians have rolled out policy after policy to restrict their citizens' rights, including through unlawful vaccine and mask mandates, vaccine passports, and even requiring masking of little children in schools. It is no wonder that ordinary people are standing up for their rights and saying, "no more."

A GoFundMe page supporting the truckers was established and quickly raised millions of dollars.² This "Freedom Convoy 2022" page was active until it was abruptly shut down by GoFundMe on February 4, 2022.³ In addition to shutting down the Freedom Convoy 2022 solicitations page, GoFundMe unilaterally decreed that "no further funds will be directly distributed to the Freedom Convoy organizers."⁴ Instead of simply refunding the money, GoFundMe stated that it would force the Freedom Convoy organizers to "send all remaining funds to credible and established charities... verified by GoFundMe."⁵ Donors who did not wish

¹ Coletta, Amanda & Adela Suliman, *A self-described 'Freedom Convoy' of Canadian truckers opposed to vaccine mandate arrives in Ottawa*, WASH. POST (Jan. 28, 2022).

² *Id.*

³ *GoFundMe Statement on the Freedom Convoy 2022 Fundraiser (2/4/2022)*, available at <https://medium.com/gofundme-stories/update-gofundme-statement-on-the-freedom-convoy-2022-fundraiser-4ca7e9714e82> (last accessed Feb. 8, 2022).

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

their funds to be summarily directed elsewhere without their consent were only given until February 19, 2022—approximately two weeks—to submit a refund form request.⁶ Only after a public outcry and amid threats of investigations⁷ did GoFundMe reverse course. The company issued an update on February 5, 2022, indicating that it would “automatically refund all contributions directly” without donors needing to submit an additional request.⁸

GoFundMe attempted to justify these actions by claiming that it had received evidence from unidentified local officials that “the previously peaceful demonstration has become an occupation, with police reports of violence and other unlawful activity.”⁹ It appears that GoFundMe simply obeyed requests from local “city officials” who disagreed with the protests in removing the Freedom Convoy 2022 page from its platform.¹⁰ Yet even the New York Times has described the Canadian protests as “boisterous” but “mostly peaceful and festive.”¹¹

GoFundMe has not taken similar action against other crowdfunded pages in support of left-leaning protest movements, including those with connections to violence such as bail funds for rioters during the Summer of 2020.¹² GoFundMe even permitted support for the Antifa-occupied CHOP zone in Seattle, Washington.¹³ For some in Big Tech, far-left violence is merely speech, while conservative speech is treated as violence.

We are concerned about the growing trend of Big Tech’s increasing refusal to permit a level playing field in the marketplace of ideas, instead actively censoring conservative viewpoints while promoting far-left causes, especially where millions of dollars in crowdsourced funds are potentially misappropriated. We therefore request that you call a hearing to examine GoFundMe’s decision to remove the Freedom Convoy 2022 page, as well as the evolution of its policies on diverting donated funds to other causes deemed by the company to be “credible and established.” We must stand up for American taxpayers by holding Big Tech accountable for its actions and determine if any laws were violated.

Thank you for your attention to this important request.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Folmar, Chloe, *DeSantis, state AGs pledge to investigate GoFundMe removing page for Canadian vaccine mandate protest*, THE HILL (Feb. 5, 2022).

⁸ *UPDATE: GoFundMe to refund all Freedom Convoy 2022 donations (2/5/2022)*, available at <https://medium.com/gofundme-stories/update-gofundme-statement-on-the-freedom-convoy-2022-fundraiser-4ca7e9714e82> (last accessed Feb. 8, 2022).

⁹ *GoFundMe Statement on the Freedom Convoy 2022 Fundraiser (2/4/2022)*, available at <https://medium.com/gofundme-stories/update-gofundme-statement-on-the-freedom-convoy-2022-fundraiser-4ca7e9714e82> (last accessed Feb. 8, 2022).

¹⁰ *Id.*

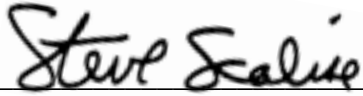
¹¹ Austen, Ian & Vjosa Isai, *Truck Protest Against Pandemic Measures Spreads Across Canada*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 5, 2022).

¹² See Knutson, Jacob, *Millions are donated to bail out arrested George Floyd protesters*, AXIOS (Jun. 27, 2020).

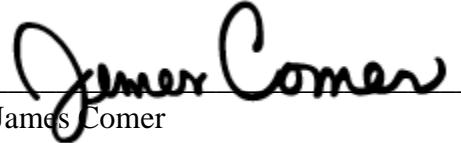
¹³ Shaw, Adam, *GoFundMe, now nixing Canadian trucker fundraiser, promoted Capitol Hill Occupied Protest appeal*, FOX NEWS (Feb. 6, 2022).

The Honorable James E. Clyburn
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Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Steve J. Scalise in black ink, written over a horizontal line.

Steve J. Scalise
Ranking Member
Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis

Handwritten signature of James Comer in black ink, written over a horizontal line.

James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight & Reform