

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 9, 2024

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

Shou Zi Chew
Chief Executive Officer
TikTok
Culver City, CA 90230

Dear Mr. Chew:

We write to you today regarding TikTok’s decision to ban pro-women’s sports advertisements as “hate speech,” while allowing ads promoting transgender surgery for minors on the platform. This is yet another example of TikTok’s attempted indoctrination of its users, in addition to instances where TikTok has deplatformed notable female athletes—like Bethany Hamilton and Riley Gaines—simply for advocating for fair play.¹ These blatant examples of bias further call into question the extent to which TikTok levies its influence over Americans for nefarious purposes.

Reporting from June indicates that TikTok banned XX-XY Athletics—an American owned small business that supports biological women in sports—from advertising on the platform. In your notification to the company informing them of the ban, TikTok labeled the content offensive and, later, hate speech. The advertisement deemed hateful by TikTok was simply a celebration of female achievement—using a real-life example—and encouraged young women to “be honest and be brave.”² Supporting young women should never be offensive, and it is telling that TikTok would consider a celebration of our girls in sports as worthy of being banned.

Even more troubling are the advertisements that TikTok *does* permit on its platform. TikTok allows woke advertisements in an attempt to mold Americans’ minds on a litany of issues. One of the most concerning advertisements that TikTok allows, though, is an advertisement promoting transgender surgery for minors. The sponsored content shows a teenage girl who recently had a double mastectomy, exposing her surgery in graphic detail.³ TikTok allowing this advertisement to run on minors’ feeds is the height of hypocrisy from a platform that suppresses conservative speech while profiting from leftist propaganda.

¹ Lindsay Kornick, *TikTok Reportedly Removes then Reinstates Riley Gaines Reaction Video to Non-Binary Activist*, FOX NEWS (August 20, 2023) <https://www.foxnews.com/media/tiktok-reportedly-removes-reinstates-riley-gaines-reaction-video-non-binary-activist>.

² Dan Zaksheske, *TikTok Labels XX-XY Athletics' Pro-Fairness In Women's Sports Ad As 'Hate Speech'*, OUTKICK (July 10, 2024) <https://www.outkick.com/culture/tiktok-labels-xx-xy-athletics-pro-fairness-womens-sports-ad-hate-speech>.


³ Jennifer Sey (@JenniferSey), TWITTER (Sep. 22, 2024, 9:46 PM), <https://twitter.com/JenniferSey/status/1837850>.


Almost 70% of Americans agree that athletes should only be allowed to compete on sports teams that correspond with their sex at birth.⁴ There is nothing controversial or hateful about the fact that men and women have biological differences, and any argument to the contrary is simply an attack on our nation’s women and girls. Not only is TikTok a threat to every American’s privacy and our national security, but it also threatens free speech and the rights of parents to rear their children in the way they see fit—rights fundamental to who we are as Americans. TikTok should immediately stop their assault on America’s young women and small businesses and allow companies that promote biological women in sports to advertise on the platform.

With that in mind, please respond to the following questions by October 23, 2024:

1. Please provide any documents or communications related to moderation and monetization decisions around advertisements promoting biological women in sports, including but not limited to XX-XY Athletics.
2. Please provide all documents, communications, and policies related to TikTok’s process for determining if an advertisement is political in nature.
3. Do you have an established appeals process for content or advertisements that are removed or not permitted to be monetized on your platform? Please provide information about that process.
4. TikTok has long claimed to be a champion of small businesses. In direct contrast with this claim, TikTok is determining which issues American brands and influencers are permitted to weigh in on. How many small businesses has TikTok banned from advertising on the platform due to their opinions or political views?
5. TikTok has regularly allowed woke brands to make full use of their digital advertisement services to reach potential customers, while conservative content and brands are deplatformed. Why has TikTok prioritized liberal speech over conservative speech?
6. How does TikTok define “hate speech” in its advertising guidelines?
7. Is it TikTok’s position that stating biological reality is “hate speech”?

Sincerely,


Marsha Blackburn
United States Senator


Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator

⁴ Matt Lavietes, *Most Americans Oppose Including Trans Athletes in Sports, Poll Finds*, NBC NEWS (June 12, 2023) <https://www.nbcnews.com/nbc-out/out-news/americans-oppose-inclusion-trans-athletes-sports-poll-finds-rcna88940>.