The Honorable Joseph R. Biden  
President of the United States of America  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500  

November 1, 2023  

Dear President Biden,

We appreciate your efforts to counter Big Tech abuses and protect all Americans’ privacy and the safety of our children online, ensure gig workers’ labor rights, and fight for fair and competitive marketplaces free of monopoly predation. We are a diverse set of organizations that reflect the myriad ways in which all Americans are affected by the digital economy.

We are writing today to express our appreciation for your administration’s efforts to ensure that any “digital trade” provisions of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), World Trade Organization (WTO) and other international commercial agreements are consistent with these goals.

The appointment of U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai to your Competition Council is welcome news. Ambassador Tai has achieved important progress in ensuring that your new worker-centered trade policy supports and promotes the goals and priorities of your all-of-government competition policy, 2023 State of the Union speech’s focus on privacy and data security, and the White House Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights.

Specifically, we thank you for suspending negotiations on the IPEF “digital trade” terms that thwart privacy, civil rights and liberties, anti-monopoly, and gig worker safeguards. And for withdrawing U.S. support for such terms in the context of the WTO’s Joint Statement Initiative on E-Commerce. Your exclusion of the most threatening digital provisions that Big Tech interests convinced the Trump administration to include in the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement helps to promote your competition, privacy, and other digital goals for consumers, workers and entrepreneurs that we support.
Unsurprisingly, some Big Tech lobbyists and their allies at the Chamber of Commerce are not happy. They hoped to commandeer IPEF negotiations, which will set rules binding countries representing 40% of the world economy, and WTO negotiations, to impose “digital trade” terms to constrain privacy, gig worker, anti-monopoly and AI accountability policy. This form of international preemption, which Big Tech interests are also pushing at other negotiating venues, would undermine your agencies’ and Congress’ efforts to remedy threats that an unregulated digital sphere poses to workers, consumers, competing businesses, and democracy itself.

The seriousness of these problems is reflected in the polling data that show Americans across the political spectrum agree with you and with us: The few dominant Big Tech firms that control broad swaths of our economy and daily lives require urgent oversight.

We appreciate USTR Tai’s comments on the need to develop a new U.S. approach to “digital trade” that respects those in Congress and administration agencies now working to develop U.S. privacy, tech anti-monopoly, AI, gig worker, and other digital policies. We support continued involvement by the administration agencies responsible for enforcement of privacy and competition policies in the process of designing this new U.S. policy. We support a new approach that safeguards the policy space needed to effectively regulate Big Tech that is consistently promoted and achieved by the United States in all trade negotiations.

Thank you for your leadership in improving our trade rules so that they promote rather than undermine the pro-worker, anti-monopoly, pro-consumer-privacy and anti-online-discrimination goals for the digital sphere that we share with you. We hope we can work with your administration to help secure these important gains for the American public.

Sincerely,

Accountable Tech
AI Now Institute
American Economic Liberties Project
Citizens Trade Campaign
Communications Workers of America
Demand Progress
Electronic Privacy Information Center
International Brotherhood of Teamsters
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Public Citizen
Rethink Trade
Tech Oversight Project
Trade Justice Education Fund
United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America
United Church of Christ Media Justice Ministry
United Steelworkers

CC: Ambassador Katherine Tai, United States Trade Representative