May 18, 2018

Mark Zuckerberg
Chairman and CEO
Facebook, Inc.
1 Hacker Way
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Dear Mr. Zuckerberg:

I am writing on behalf of the News Media Alliance, which represents 2,000 news organizations across the United States and globally. We commend you for considering changes to your policies to create a more transparent advertising ecosystem. However, we strenuously disagree with what you are proposing as it relates to news media.

Your plan to group quality publishers alongside political advocacy, which the ad archive will do, dangerously blurs the lines between real reporting and propaganda. It is a fundamental mischaracterization of journalism that threatens to undermine its ability to play its critical role in society as the fourth estate.
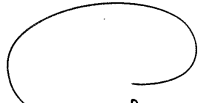
This treatment of quality news as political, even in the context of marketing, is deeply problematic. You are forcing publishers to make a choice between labeling that is fundamentally counter to who we are and what we do, or to walk back our presence on a dominant platform for news consumption and discovery. This will have the effect of elevating less credible news sources on Facebook, the exact opposite of your stated intent.

Newsgathering and reporting about politics is not the same thing as advocacy or politics. The role of news is to help people understand the issues of the day, which is critical to a functioning democracy. Understanding those issues and the various points of view about them is independent of advocating outcomes.

We understand your desire to create more transparency for the end user and would like to participate in the process to improve the current standards. For example, you could require disclosure from all advertisers on all advertising; exempt news in the ad archive and labeling process for political content; or label and archive news independently from politics and advocacy.

It is our hope that you will reconsider this path.

Sincerely,

David Chavern
President and CEO
News Media Alliance

CC:
Sheryl Sandberg, Facebook
Campbell Brown, Facebook
Dean Baquet, The New York Times
Marty Baron, The Washington Post
Gerard Baker, The Wall Street Journal
Nicole Carroll, USA Today