



Chair

Katie Nguyen Kalvoda

August 1, 2023

The Honorable Lina M. Khan, Chair
Federal Trade Commission
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington DC 20580

Executive Director

Varun Nikore

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Dear Chair Khan:

I write to you after tragic and traumatic mass shootings in our Asian American and Pacific Islander Communities (AAPI), in hopes that you will take appropriate action to ensure such tragedies never happen again. Part of this work means ensuring that guns are not marketed and sold using unfair, and deceptive means. This is why I write to urge the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to undertake an investigation and consider regulation of the unfair and deceptive advertising practices used by the firearms industry. For examples of this kind of behavior, the FTC could probe the marketing practices of companies like

BPS Direct, L.L.C, which conducts business as Bass Pro Shop.

Gun manufacturers have created a [cycle of violence](#) and fear that they benefit off while harming our AAPI communities. Due to the anti-Asian rhetoric during the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a **339 percent increase in anti-Asian hate incidents**; this is also correlated with a recent and significant increase in gun violence across the country. Hence, it's no surprise that the AAPI community experienced high profile mass shootings recently in places like: Allen, Texas; Monterey Park; Half Moon Bay; and, Atlanta, Georgia; and Indianapolis. These public displays of violence are meant to instill fear and assert perceived power and dominance.

Unfortunately, the gun industry has unscrupulously exploited rising fears of hate motivated violence to market gun purchases as a safety solution to the Asian American community. The gun industry, National Rifle Association (NRA) and the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) have engaged “cultural ambassadors” to exploit fears within our Asian American communities to market guns as the only tool for safety. AAPIs have historically been a low gun ownership community; however, we believe this kind of marketing has resulted in [unprecedented gun ownership](#) among Asian Americans.



For example, Chris Cheng, who is a paid spokesperson for Bass Pro Shop, regularly appears as a supposed “independent” gun owner who is merely advocating for his own rights. Such “performances” recently culminated in Mr. Cheng’s [testimony in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee](#) on March 23, 2021 when he testified as a supposed “independent expert.” Any investigation into marketing practices of the gun industry should look into how spokespeople like Mr. Cheng are funded by gun sellers and/or manufacturers and groups like the NSSF; and how such ambassadors strategically present guns as the only option for safety.

The recent record level of gun ownership is dangerous for our community. We know that by any conceivable metric, guns do not make us safer. Risk of accidental death, injury and suicides increase when guns are in the home. In fact according to an Everytown study in 2022, **there has been a [168% increase in firearm suicide among young AAPIs in the last decade](#) – the biggest increase out of all demographic group.** And of course, we’ve seen community tragedies in Monterey Park, and Half Moon Bay recently. It should come as no surprise then, that 84% of Asian Americans and 74% of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders worry about being victims of mass shootings ([AAPI Data](#)).

The gun industry has known for decades that gun ownership in a home increases the likelihood of death or injury - whether by homicide or suicide; that they ignore this, and continue to target the AAPI market is despicable. Similarly the cigarette and old industry similarly knew for decades that their products were extremely harmful before they were held accountable. Lives are at stake - the FTC can and must act now to ensure that the gun industry is not allowed to continue harming the AAPI community with impunity.

Sincerely,



Varun Nikore
Executive Director