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34TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CAPITAL MARKETS
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May 14, 2026

Ms. Ariane Gorin
Chief Executive Officer
Expedia Group
1111 Expedia Group Way
Seattle, WA 98119

Mr. Glenn D. Fogel
Chief Executive Officer
Booking.com
28 Liberty Street, 29th Floor
New York, NY 10005

Mr. Brian Chesky
Co-founder & Chief Executive Officer
Airbnb
888 Brannan Street, 4th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94103

Ms. Brigit Zimmerman
Chief Executive Officer
Priceline
800 Connecticut Avenue
Norwalk, CT 06854

Mr. Matt Goldberg
President & Chief Executive Officer
Tripadvisor Group
400 1st Avenue
Needham, MA 02494

Dear Ms. Gorin, Mr. Fogel, Mr. Chesky, Ms. Zimmerman, and Mr. Goldberg:

I write to express deep concern over the practices of Online Travel Agents (OTAs) in relation to reservation guidelines, fee disclosure, and customer service. My constituents have brought to my attention a pattern of failures, deceptions, and consumer abuses perpetrated by your platforms that I find deeply troubling and wholly unacceptable. These are not isolated incidents. They represent a systemic breakdown of the trust that millions of Americans place in your companies every time they book a hotel room.

My constituents have described arriving at hotels after long journeys, often across time zones, only to be told their reservation is not in the system. Why, because your platforms routinely fail to transmit guest details to hotels in a timely fashion, creating overbooking and travel delay scenarios that leave guests without rooms they paid for and their travels over budget. Often times, travelers are stranded late at night in unfamiliar cities with no available accommodations. They are also denied refunds for mistakes caused by your platforms or downstream booking partners. Additionally, hotels frequently assign inferior rooms to OTA customers compared to those who booked directly, and guests have no recourse due to obscured terms in your booking flows. Resort

fees, service fees, booking fees, and taxes are not displayed clearly, often buried within the fine print. This practice is a reason why in 2025, Booking Holdings, the parent company of Booking.com, paid \$9.5 million in a settlement with the State of Texas¹ over hidden fees charged to consumers. Compounding this is the prevalence of prepaid, non-refundable bookings that have become the default offering on your platforms.

In these cases, you have abandoned your companies' commitment to services and have abandoned travelers at a time when they are vulnerable and desperate.

We are in a moment when travel demand is softening under the weight of higher costs and travel delays caused by the current Administration's policies and House Republicans' longest shutdown of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. That makes every hidden fee, every stranded traveler, and every customer service breakdown on your platforms even more consequential. Travelers deserve confidence that the price they are shown is the price they will pay, and that when problems arise, there is a clear and accountable path toward resolution. Yet, the reality is that after these events transpire, my constituents have no clear resolution and instead find themselves trapped in a maddening loop of finger-pointing: the hotel directs them to your platform, your platform sends them back to the hotel, and hours pass with no solution.

With the FIFA World Cup approaching and hundreds of thousands of domestic and international visitors expected to rely on these platforms as their primary gateway to lodging and travel in the United States, a failure to address these systemic issues risks turning what my constituents are already experiencing into an international embarrassment.

In order to bring needed transparency and reforms to your platforms' standards, I urge you to submit detailed proposals that implement the following:

- **Single Point of Accountability:** OTAs must take full responsibility for resolving consumer issues instead of shifting blame to hotels or third parties they contract to.
- **Travel Delay and Emergency Relief:** Automatic, penalty-free rebooking or refunds with real-time support for travelers facing cancellations, medical emergencies, or other documented crises out of their control.
- **Full Fee Transparency:** OTAs must comply with the Federal Trade Commission's rule requiring the clear, upfront disclosure of all mandatory hotel fees in the initial displayed price and must ensure through their contractual agreements that any downstream booking sites or third-party distributors adhere to the same transparency standards.
- **Accurate Inventory:** Listings must reflect real, available rooms at the stated price and amenities, with real-time verification and platform liability for false listings.

¹ Reuters. (2025, August 19). *Booking.com parent reaches \$9.5 million "junk fee" settlement with Texas.*
<https://www.reuters.com/legal/litigation/bookingcom-parent-95-million-junk-fee-settlement-with-texas-2025-08-19/>

- Timely Reservation Transmission: Booking confirmations and guest details must be sent to properties immediately to prevent overbooking, with free equivalent accommodations required when failures occur.
- Responsible Artificial Intelligence (AI) Standards: Platforms must not rely solely on AI for customer service or dispute resolution and must ensure the same standards apply to downstream booking partners. AI-generated images or descriptions may not mislead consumers about a property's appearance, amenities, location, or quality.
- Refund and Fraud Protections: Refunds owed to consumers must be issued within five business days, alongside stronger safeguards against fraud and fake listings.

If these concerns are not addressed, I am prepared to introduce legislation and pursue other means such as committee hearings to improve fee transparency, clarify refund timelines, enhance inventory accuracy standards, and address deceptive practices, as well as potential avenues for consumer recourse. I will also consider engaging in further oversight on these issues. For far too long, consumers have been misled or harmed by current practices and deserve clear protections and accountability.

I look forward to working together for the betterment of all South Texans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vicente Gonzalez', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress