

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

Brian Chesky
Chief Executive Officer
Airbnb Inc.
888 Brannan Street,
San Francisco, California 94103

December 23, 2020

Dear Mr. Chesky,

I am writing to express my concern regarding Airbnb's policy on cancellations and refunds during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Specifically, a CBS Chicago article cited that a group from Chicago was unable to receive a refund after cancelling their Airbnb stay due to COVID-19 precautions.¹ To protect customers, I believe that companies have a responsibility during this pandemic to accommodate travel changes and not place the burden on customers or hosts for taking COVID-19 precautions.

As you know, Airbnb's current "extenuating circumstances policy" due to COVID-19 is as follows:

1. "Reservations for stays and Airbnb Experiences made on or before March 14, 2020, with a check-in date within the next 45 days from today, are covered by the policy and may be canceled before check-in. Guests who cancel will have cancellation and refund options"²
2. "Reservations for stays and Airbnb Experiences made after March 14, 2020 will not be covered under our extenuating circumstances policy, except where the guest or host is currently sick with COVID-19. COVID-19 related circumstances not covered include: *transportation disruptions and cancellations; travel advisories and restrictions; health advisories and quarantines; changes to applicable law; and other government mandates—like evacuation orders, border closures, prohibitions on short-term rentals, and shelter-in-place requirements.*"³

Airbnb must acknowledge that extreme circumstances, such as the COVID-19 Pandemic, warrant more flexibility for their customers who choose not to travel due to this public health crisis. This requires a swift change in company policy as the Airbnb extenuating circumstances policy does not cover "health advisories and quarantines." The group from Chicago (as featured by CBS Chicago) was complying with CDC guidelines and Chicago's stay-at-home advisory by cancelling their trip, but they were not given a refund. Given the rising case numbers in the United States and over 300,000 deaths due to COVID-19, this type of public health precaution should be encouraged rather than punished by corporations. Airbnb should be a corporate leader in this regard; however, your current policy and unwillingness to offer refunds has resulted in unfair financial burden during a time of severe economic hardship for millions of Americans.

To that end, not only are your customers suffering due to your COVID-19 policies, but your contracted hosts are as well. Earlier this year, Airbnb announced that it would establish a \$250 million coronavirus relief fund for hosts, thus contributing to their lost income under cancellation policies. However, many hosts have reported that they

¹ [After Friends Call Off Trip To Mexico Because Of Pandemic, They Can't Get Full Refund Or Credit From Airbnb](#). CBS Chicago. December 15, 2020.

² [Extenuating Circumstances Policy and the coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#). Airbnb. October 1, 2020.

³ Ibid.

haven't received payments from that fund, and one host commented that it was a "publicity stunt."⁴ At the same time, while I acknowledge that Airbnb's revenue is down from last year, the company did turn a profit last quarter.⁵

In light of these concerns, I request the following:

- 1) Airbnb should, among other things, revise its extenuating circumstances policy to include "health advisories and quarantines" to take the burden off customers and to emphasize the importance of these advisories.
- 2) In order to take the burden off contracted hosts as well, I request that you follow through on your promise to provide financial compensation to hosts.

I hope that Airbnb acts swiftly in taking the appropriate steps to protect consumers, its hosts, and help curb the overall spread of the COVID-19 virus in the United States. Thank you and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Raja Krishnamoorthi". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress

⁴ [Airbnb hosts say they're getting nothing or comically small payments from \\$250 million relief fund, call it a 'publicity stunt'](#). *CNBC*. April 22, 2020.

⁵ [Airbnb files to go public, turned a profit last quarter](#). *CNBC*. November 16, 2020.