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December 5, 2022

Mr. Jeff Bezos  
Chief Executive Officer  
Amazon.com, Inc  
410 Terry Avenue North  
Seattle, WA 98109

Dear Mr. Bezos,

I write with grave concern regarding widespread fraudulent reviews of Amazon products and reports that Amazon sellers incentivize consumers to leave positive reviews in exchange for gift cards or free products.

With the holiday season coming up, consumers rely on reviews of products in order to make informed purchases. Therefore, it is crucial that reviews of products are accurate and honest. While Amazon has taken some steps to curb these false reviews, it is abundantly clear that the company is not doing enough to end this dishonest practice that harms consumers.

The practice of leaving false or misleading reviews has been common on Amazon for a number of years. However, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and increased reliance on e-commerce as opposed to in-person retail, the practice has become ever more rampant. According to Fakespot, a fraudulent-review-detection service, around 42 percent of the 720 million Amazon reviews assessed in 2020 were fraudulent. Third-party sellers have been inflating their reviews on Amazon by sending free items – such as payments through PayPal or Amazon gift cards – in exchange for positive reviews.<sup>1</sup>

These false reviews serve to benefit sellers alone. Studies have shown that a one-star increase on an Amazon product can increase sales by as much as 26 percent.<sup>2</sup> As a result, inflating positive reviews has proven to be lucrative for sellers. While Amazon has taken some steps to shut down the accounts of fraudulent reviewers, this approach has proven to be ineffective. Furthermore, I am particularly concerned that Amazon has seemingly done little to

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<sup>1</sup> Matt Stieb, "Amazon's War on Fake Reviews," *New York Magazine* (New York, New York) July 26, 2022

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

hold sellers themselves accountable when they engage in or abet this deceitful practice or inform consumers about the risks of fake reviews. Amazon has a duty to do more to curb the rise of fake reviews by holding both scam reviewers and sellers who inflate their reviews accountable, including through:

1. drastically increasing efforts to identify scam reviewers and sellers that are purchasing fake reviews, such the tactic of offering gift cards for positive reviews.
2. aggressively holding sellers accountable for purchasing fake reviews, including suspending product pages or seller accounts for engaging in such deception, or imposing other financial consequences.
3. informing consumers about the risk of fake reviews and warning them if a product they have purchased was found to be distorting their ratings.
4. providing a clear mechanism for consumers to report if they received an offer to leave a positive review in exchange for payment, and making them aware of that reporting tool.

Buyer trust is central to the legitimacy of Amazon's business and you must do more to protect consumers from being misled. Amazon must invest in the necessary infrastructure to crack down on fraudulent, deceptive reviewers and sellers. Anything less will continue to harm consumers and adversely affects Amazon's credibility as a trusted online marketplace.

As the holiday season approaches and e-commerce purchasing is at an all-time high, Amazon has a duty to do more to curb the rise of fake reviews by holding both scam reviewers and sellers who inflate their reviews accountable. Consumers deserve nothing less than the most accurate reviews and information regarding the quality of the product they are purchasing. Please provide a response outlining Amazon's next steps by December 19, 2022. I appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senate