

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Mr. Shou Zi Chew
Chief Executive Officer
TikTok Inc.
5800 Bristol Parkway, Suite 100
Culver City, California 90230

Dear Mr. Chew

I write to you today to request the removal of all videos providing instructions on how to break into 2010-2021 Hyundais and Kias, proactive moderation of your application to prevent that type of content from trending, and we request answers on the relationship between TikTok and any other criminal behavior that your application has promoted through its algorithm.

Recent reporting from the New York Times and other media outlets is beyond troubling. Car theft is on the rise in many of our major cities, with some police reports indicating an 85% increase in car thefts in their jurisdiction and others reporting an 800% year-to-year increase.

In my home state of Colorado, the monthly motor vehicle theft rate has increased 120.6% since 2019. Recent statistics¹ show that Colorado continues to lead the nation in auto thefts. Oftentimes, cars are being stolen from those who are struggling financially and can least afford it - 85.6% of vehicle thefts in Colorado² are vehicles valued at \$24,999 or less.

Troublingly, teens make up a startling³ number of those committing this crime across the country. Memphis, Tennessee is an emblematic example: of 175 people arrested for car theft in Memphis this year, nearly 50% were teenagers. Some in law enforcement are calling the rash of car thefts a “social contagion” brought about by viral videos.

¹ http://www.rmija.org/auto/auto_theft/colorado_auto_theft_statistics.asp

² <https://commonsenseinstitute.org/on-the-road-to-1-billion-in-vehicles-stolen-the-data-trends-behind-colorados-motor-vehicle-theft-crisis/>

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/us/car-theft-teens-pandemic.html>

Inspired by videos widely seen and shared on TikTok that highlight specific security vulnerabilities, teenagers have been targeting 2010-2021 Hyundais and Kias for theft and leaning on information about security vulnerabilities the videos disclosed. These videos detailing the means and method of theft have amassed tens of millions of views on the app. This crime has proliferated with the information - and sometimes literal how-to-instructions - TikTok promoted on its pages.

In addition, a popular hashtag, #KiaBoys, curates criminal behavior for millions of impressionable teenagers. Social media promoting and encouraging car theft is, by definition, problematic. Simply put, TikTok has materially contributed to the scourge of car theft, robbing everyday Americans of vital transportation.

TikTok's community guidelines state that "We take a firm stance against enabling violence on or off TikTok." And that "We do not allow people to use our platform to threaten or incite violence." This does not seem to conform with reality. The content that the TikTok algorithm pushes has a direct effect on the lives of my constituents. Even though TikTok cannot be held liable for all of the car theft and carjackings that prevent hard-working citizens from providing for their families, taking their kids to school, or journeying to the store for necessities, it is responsible for every user that steals cars based on a template that you provide.

Therefore I have the following questions:

1. At what point were you aware of the viral trend of car jacking instructions on your platform, including but not limited to the hashtag #KiaBoys?
2. What steps have you taken to blunt the virality of #KiaBoys and other hashtags related to car theft?
3. What is the TikTok process for deplatforming or reducing the spread of criminal content in general?
4. What role did your algorithm play in promoting #KiaBoys?

I look forward to a quick response to these questions. TikTok should not be using its platform to encourage young Americans to commit crimes.

Sincerely,



Member of Congress