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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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August 3, 2020

Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Secretary Pompeo:

We write to you with significant concerns regarding the threats to our national security and to liberties around the globe posed by technology companies with direct or indirect links to the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic that originated in China, millions of Americans—through no fault of their own – are forced to stay home. As a result, many people rely on the Internet and mobile applications to keep informed, connect with loved ones, educate children, and get basic necessities.

This increased reliance obligates us to ensure technology companies are protecting our citizens' information, with a heightened focus on uniquely dangerous threats, such as those companies with ties to the CCP. The CCP's recent behavior in Hong Kong have confirmed our concerns. Specifically, although TikTok left the Hong Kong market for seemingly virtuous reasons, its parent company, ByteDance, and other Chinese companies eagerly take its place. This is nothing more than a data collection shell game by ByteDance as it freely shares Hong Kong citizens' data with the Chinese Communist regime.

Two months ago, Energy and Commerce Republicans wrote ByteDance demanding answers on TikTok's data practices as it relates to American users and its corporate governance, given TikTok's CEO also serves as ByteDance's COO.¹ Additional letters were sent recently to

¹ <https://republicans-energycommerce.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/2020.05.21-Letter-to-TikTok.pdf>

Apple² and Google³ about their application (app) store policies to learn more, particularly about what vetting is done to determine if apps or app developers are connected to the CCP or Chinese state-owned entities.

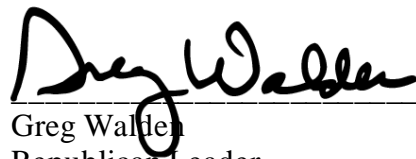
While we remain deeply concerned with TikTok, such concerns extend beyond the popular short-form video app. For example, we recently learned a retail store partnered with DeepCam LLC – a company with links to China and its authoritarian government – secretly to deploy facial recognition technology at hundreds of locations, collecting information on countless Americans.⁴ Additionally, we know companies like Shenzhen Hawk, a subsidiary of Chinese conglomerate, TCL, develop and offer apps with spyware and malware designed to harvest user data and send it back to China.⁵

Other countries share our concerns. Recently, India banned TikTok and dozens of other Chinese apps,⁶ and a group of Japanese lawmakers announced that they were seeking to restrict the use of TikTok and other apps developed by Chinese firms.⁷ Clearly, China is a threat that we must continue to take seriously. We must protect Americans from deceptive apps that are deployed simply to harvest American information to share with the CCP.

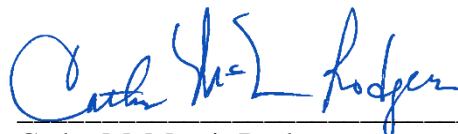
Accordingly, to learn more about such significant threats, we respectfully request a classified briefing on TikTok and other technology companies with purported ties to the CCP at your earliest convenience.

If you have any questions, please contact Tim Kurth and Bijan Koohmaraie at (202) 225-3641. Thank you for your prompt attention to this request.

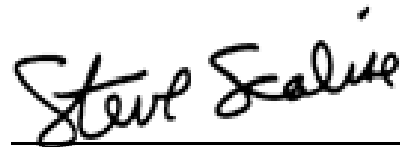
Sincerely,



Greg Walden
Republican Leader



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Republican Leader
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection
and Commerce



Steve Scalise
Republican Whip

² <https://republicans-energycommerce.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/2020.07.29-Letter-to-Apple-.pdf>

³ <https://republicans-energycommerce.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/2020.07.29-Letter-to-Google-.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/usa-riteaid-software/>

⁵ <https://www.zdnet.com/article/malware-found-preinstalled-on-some-alcatel-smartphones/>

⁶ <https://techcrunch.com/2020/06/29/india-bans-tiktok-dozens-of-other-chinese-apps/>

⁷ <https://techcrunch.com/2020/07/28/japan-proposes-tiktok-ban/>