

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 3, 2018

Mr. Sundar Pichai  
Chief Executive Officer  
Google, LLC  
1600 Amphitheatre Pkwy  
Mountain View, California 94043

Dear Mr. Pichai:

We write in response to recent news reports about Google's plan to launch a censored version of its search engine in China—codenamed “Dragonfly”—that would prohibit websites and search terms deemed objectionable by the Chinese government and Communist Party. If true, this reported plan is deeply troubling and risks making Google complicit in human rights abuses related to China's rigorous censorship regime.

After a cyberattack that compromised the Gmail accounts of dozens of Chinese human rights activists, Google's March 2010 decision to stop censoring results on Google.cn was widely praised. The company's statement at the time noted: “We want as many people in the world as possible to have access to our services, including users in mainland China, yet the Chinese government has been crystal clear throughout our discussions that self-censorship is a non-negotiable legal requirement.”

Chinese authorities, however, continue to censor a broad range of news and social media topics that they have deemed politically “sensitive” due to their belief that these topics may contribute to criticism of the Chinese government and Communist Party, and possibly lead to collective action. In recent weeks, a significant vaccine scandal in China, which may have affected the health of hundreds of thousands of Chinese children, has run afoul of censors. News reports indicate that, as of last Monday, the Chinese word for “vaccine” was one of the most restricted on Weibo, China's Twitter-like microblog platform.

Moreover, China has in recent years harnessed the power of communications technology to advance its surveillance and social control efforts. The *Financial Times* recently reported that the largest technology companies in China—including Alibaba, Tencent, Baidu, and JD.com—are “inextricably linked with the Chinese state and its security apparatus, and the authorities retain the upper hand in the relationship.” Google's reported activity to build applications compatible with Chinese censorship demands is all the more concerning in light of relationships that Google has made with these companies, including a technology cross-licensing joint venture with Tencent and an investment of \$550 million in JD.com.

It is a coup for the Chinese government and Communist Party to force Google—the biggest search engine in the world—to comply with their onerous censorship requirements, and sets a worrying precedent for other companies seeking to do business in China without compromising their core values. In light of these reports, we respectfully request answers to the following questions:

- Is Google in the process of developing a censored search engine or other censored applications for China? If so, will this be part of a joint venture with a Chinese domestic partner?
- What has changed since 2010 to make Google comfortable cooperating with the rigorous censorship regime in China?
- In many cases, the entrance of a western firm in China is conditioned upon that firm entering a joint venture with a domestic Chinese firm. Was Google's decision to enter a joint venture with Tencent connected in any way with its efforts to enter the Chinese market via the custom search app?
- If Google is working on a search product for the mainland Chinese market, which "blacklist" of censored searches and websites are you using? Are there any phrases or words that Google is refusing to censor?
- Will Google employees involved in managing "Dragonfly" be required to attend the official mandatory trainings on "Marxist news values" and "socialist values" as required of other technology companies that provide Internet news content services in China?
- Presumably Google will comply with China's Cybersecurity Law and its data localization requirements. Will Google provide information about the search histories of individual users to Chinese government authorities? What confidence does Google have that its local joint venture partner will abide by any user protections that Google puts in place?

We appreciate your prompt reply to this inquiry, including any views that you are prepared to share as to how this reported development can be reconciled with Google's unofficial motto, "Don't be evil."

Sincerely,



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Marco Rubio  
U.S. Senator



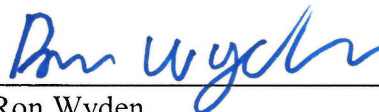
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Mark R. Warner  
U.S. Senator



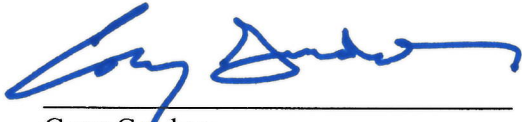
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Tom Cotton  
U.S. Senator



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Ron Wyden  
U.S. Senator



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Cory Gardner  
U.S. Senator



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Robert Menendez  
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