

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 21, 2024

The Honorable Avril Haines  
Director of National Intelligence  
Office of the Director of National Intelligence  
Washington, D.C. 20511

Dear Director Haines:

We write to urge you to declassify information on TikTok and its parent company, ByteDance, in order to better inform the American people about the significant risks the social media platform's Chinese ownership poses to our national security.

American intelligence and law enforcement officials on a bipartisan basis have repeatedly raised alarms that the Chinese government can use its direct and absolute control over ByteDance to exert malign influence over what users see on TikTok and spy on their private information. The public record regarding TikTok's ties to China and Beijing's exploitation of the app is damning: ByteDance has used private data to spy on American journalists,<sup>1</sup> TikTok is absolutely dependent on China for the development and operations,<sup>2</sup> TikTok has stored Americans' data on Chinese services despite its executives testifying to Congress that it does not,<sup>3</sup> and TikTok has censored videos critical of China's human rights abuses.<sup>4</sup>

We are deeply troubled by the information and concerns raised by the intelligence community in recent classified briefings to Congress. TikTok is a weapon in the hands of the Chinese government, and poses an active risk to our democratic institutions and national security. Meanwhile, TikTok and ByteDance have themselves provided powerful confirmation of these fears through their concerted efforts to undermine legislation that would sever ties

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<sup>1</sup> "EXCLUSIVE: TikTok Spied On Forbes Journalists." Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/emilybaker-white/2022/12/22/tiktok-tracks-forbes-journalists-bytedance/>

<sup>2</sup> "TikTok insiders say social media company is tightly controlled by Chinese parent ByteDance." CNBC. <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/06/25/tiktok-insiders-say-chinese-parent-bytedance-in-control.html>

<sup>3</sup> "Exclusive: TikTok Confirms Some U.S. User Data Is Stored In China." Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/alexandralevine/2023/06/21/tiktok-confirms-data-china-bytedance-security-cfius/?sh=b4cf23332708>

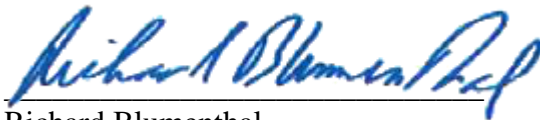
<sup>4</sup> "Revealed: how TikTok censors videos that do not please Beijing." The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2019/sep/25/revealed-how-tiktok-censors-videos-that-do-not-please-beijing>

between the app and China — using its control over the app to amplify misinformation about legislation.

As Congress and the Administration consider steps to address TikTok's ties to the Chinese government, it is critically important that the American people, especially TikTok users, understand the national security issues at stake. We therefore urge you to declassify information about TikTok and ByteDance, and their ties to Chinese governments' influence and espionage activities, to better educate the public on the need for urgent action.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



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Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senate



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Marsha Blackburn  
United States Senate