

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 20, 2026

The Honorable Brendan Carr
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
45 L Street NE
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Carr:

We write to express serious concerns about Paramount Global's request for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to authorize foreign investors to own between 49.5% and 100% of the equity in its FCC-licensed broadcast television stations.¹ This would include significant equity stakes held by the sovereign wealth funds of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Qatar to finance the \$111 billion merger of Paramount Skydance and Warner Bros. Discovery and could also include ownership by a company with links to the Chinese government. Such a media giant would include the 28 television stations owned by CBS, the movies and television shows of Paramount Pictures, and soon CNN, HBO, and other iconic media properties. The scale, concentration, and scope of this proposal raise serious questions. Foreign governments hostile to a free and independent press could exert unprecedented influence over a media conglomerate vital to American journalism and culture.

Section 310 of the Communications Act prohibits companies with more than 25% foreign ownership from indirectly owning TV or radio broadcast stations.² This provision was meant to ensure powerful media companies are ultimately controlled by American citizens. Paramount, however, seeks an exception far exceeding the 25% statutory cap. Congress enacted these restrictions on foreign ownership of broadcasters because of concerns about the "foreign dominance of the cables and the dangers from espionage and propaganda disseminated through foreign-owned radio stations in the United States" during the First World War.³

The foreign governments behind this investment systematically suppress press freedom in their own countries and have made a series of investments and gifts to entities controlled by the President and his family, raising serious concerns about their influence over the independent American media and the potential for corruption.

Reporters Without Borders ranked Saudi Arabia among the world's five worst countries in the 2026 Press Freedom Index above only Iran, China, North Korea, and Eritrea."⁴

¹ FCC, Public Notice, Paramount Global Seeks Foreign Ownership Declaratory Ruling Pursuant to Section 310(b) (4) of the Communications Act of 1934, as Amended, DA 26-411.

² 47 U.S.C. § 310(b)(4).

³ *National Association of Broadcasters v. FCC*, No. 24-1296 (D.C. Cir. 2025), at 7 (quoting Hearings on H.R. 8301 before the H. Comm. on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, 73d Cong. 54 (1934)).

⁴ Reporters Without Borders, World Press Freedom Index, <https://rsf.org/en/index?year=2026>.

The Press Freedom Index also found that the UAE and Qatar suppress independent media.⁵ In 2021, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence concluded that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman ordered the torture, execution, and dismemberment of Saudi journalist and *Washington Post* columnist Jamal Khashoggi as part of the “Crown Prince’s support for using violent measures to silence dissidents abroad.”⁶ And these countries have engaged in influence peddling in the United States. In 2025, Emirati companies close to the government invested in the Trump family’s cryptocurrency, shortly before the Trump administration authorized the sale of advanced AI chips to the UAE, and Qatar’s government gifted President Trump a luxury jet being turned into the new Air Force One.⁷

If the filing is approved, Saudi, UAE, and Qatari sovereign investment funds would have significant influence over a number of the most significant and impactful news reporting and investigative journalism outlets in the United States, including CNN, CBS News, 60 Minutes, and 28 local Paramount-owned television stations in 17 of the country’s largest media markets, including New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Dallas, Boston, Seattle, Detroit, Minneapolis, Miami, Denver, and Pittsburgh. And the Trump Administration appears to believe that the transaction will reduce media independence. Indeed, in complaining about CNN’s coverage of the Iran War, Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth has said “the sooner” that Paramount takes over CNN, “the better.”⁸

And what’s not in the petition is just as concerning. Media reports indicate that Tencent, a Chinese company on the Department of Defense’s list of companies connected to the Chinese military, will also take an equity stake in the combined company.⁹ Allowing our most significant global adversary to partly own Paramount or a combined new entity that will own CNN and CBS News would risk our national security.

Paramount’s petition asks for an unprecedented degree of foreign control of U.S. broadcasting. Paramount’s rationale for a waiver of foreign ownership rules is based on its assertion that the foreign funds will be passive investors. But even as passive investors, these foreign entities could be in a position to gain sensitive information on Americans’ financial and other personal information, and their viewing habits, as well as the ability to influence the content carried by this massive media conglomerate.

⁵ <https://rsf.org/en/country/united-arab-emirates>; <https://rsf.org/en/country/qatar>.

⁶ Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Assessing the Saudi Government’s Role in the Killing of Jamal Khashoggi*, (Feb. 11, 2021); <https://web.archive.org/web/20210226180954/https://www.odni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/Assessment-Saudi-Gov-Role-in-JK-Death-20210226.pdf>.

⁷ Sam Kessler, et al., ‘Spy Sheikh’ Bought Secret Stake in Trump Company, *Wall Street Journal* (Jan. 31, 2026); Maya Yang, Boeing jet gifted to Trump by Qatari royal family to be delivered by summer, *Guardian* (Jan. 22, 2026).

⁸ Michael Grynbaum, Pete Hegseth Says ‘the Sooner David Ellison’ Buys CNN, ‘the Better’, *New York Times* (Mar. 13, 2026).

⁹ Department of Defense, Entities Identified as Chinese Military Companies Operating in the United States in Accordance with Section 1260H of the William M. (“Mac”) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021, (“Mac”) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021, <https://media.defense.gov/2025/Jan/07/2003625471/-1/-1/1/ENTITIES-IDENTIFIED-AS-CHINESE-MILITARY-COMPANIES-OPERATING-IN-THE-UNITED-STATES.PDF>; Doug Cao and Manuel Gorri, Tencent is said to be back on Paramount-Warner Bros. deal with fresh funding, *Bloomberg* (Mar. 8, 2026).

The FCC has never approved a significant ownership stake of an American broadcaster by a sovereign wealth fund—that is, an investment entity controlled by a foreign government. The plain text of the Communications Act prohibits ownership by “a foreign government or representative” without regard to voting rights. And the FCC’s prior approval of foreign ownership of equity in broadcasters has been limited to entities based in allied NATO, Five Eyes, or friendly neighboring countries.

In the past, you have raised serious questions about foreign ownership of U.S. media entities. In 2024, you said Chinese ownership of TikTok presented “a clear and present danger to U.S. national security” and supported forcing divestiture.¹⁰ You also objected that the Commission approved the transfer of radio stations in 2024 without “plans to wall off the unvetted foreign interests.”¹¹ But in the case of Paramount, even before the application was filed, you claimed that the FCC had a “very minimal” role in reviewing Paramount’s foreign ownership, the review would “get through pretty quickly,” and that the Paramount-Warner Bros. transaction was a “good deal.”¹² These comments raise questions about your impartiality and the rigor of the Commission’s review of this unprecedented foreign investment.

Given the well-documented hostility against a free press in their own countries, we have serious doubts that paving the way for these anti-democratic governments to own between 49.5% and 100% of an American media empire serves the “public interest.” At a minimum, we urge you to conduct a rigorous and thorough review of the foreign investment in Paramount, its impact on editorial independence, and its implications for U.S. national security. We also demand that this investment be considered by the full Commission rather than by staff behind closed doors.¹³

Please provide answers to the following questions and document requests by June 5, 2026:

1. Will you commit to a comprehensive review by Team Telecom, especially given the unprecedented risks to press freedom posed by the proposed equity investors?
2. Will the Commission and Team Telecom specifically review Tencent’s role in the transaction and equity stake in Paramount?
3. Will you commit to voting on Paramount’s request to raise its foreign ownership at the Commission level? If not, why?

¹⁰ Nikolas Lanum, FCC commissioner says TikTok is a ‘clear and present danger’ to US national security, Fox Business (Mar. 12, 2024); <https://www.foxbusiness.com/media/fcc-commissioner-tiktok-clear-present-danger-us-national-security>.

¹¹ Audacy License, LLC, et al., FCC 24-94, Dissenting Statement of Commissioner Brendan Carr (2024), <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/FCC-24-94A4.pdf>.

¹² Sawdah Bhaimiya, FCC chief tells CNBC WBD-Paramount merger deal is ‘cleaner’ than Netflix’s, will be approved ‘quickly,’ CNBC (Mar. 3, 2026), <https://www.cnbc.com/2026/03/03/fcc-chair-brendan-carr-wbd-paramount-merger-deal-netflix.html>.

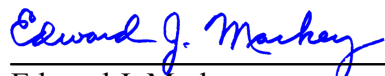
¹³ Cf. Letter from Chairman Ted Cruz and Ranking Member Maria Cantwell to Brendan Carr, Chairman, FCC, (Mar. 30, 2026) (criticizing the approval of the Nexstar-Tegna transaction on delegated authority rather than by the full Commission).

4. Do you believe that foreign ownership of between 49.5% and 100% of Paramount, contemplated by the filing, would mean that the Middle Eastern sovereign wealth investment funds would have effective control or influence over decision making? If not, why?
5. What specific assurances have the Saudi, Emirati, and Qatari sovereign wealth funds, and Tencent, provided the Commission that they will not attempt to influence the editorial, journalistic, or content decisions at Paramount, either by suppressing reporting and creative content unfavorable to their governments or by promoting content that runs contrary to American interests or values? Please provide all related documents.

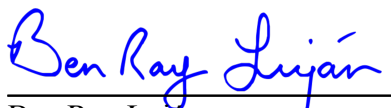
Sincerely,



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



Andy Kim
United States Senator



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator