

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 19, 2025

Shari Redstone  
Chair  
Paramount Global  
1515 Broadway  
New York, NY 10036

Dear Ms. Redstone:

We write to express serious concern regarding the possibility that media company Paramount Global (Paramount) may be engaging in improper conduct involving the Trump Administration in exchange for approval of its megamerger with Skydance Media (Skydance). Paramount appears to be trying to settle<sup>1</sup> a lawsuit that it has assessed as “completely without merit,” and moderating the content of its programs in order to obtain approval of this merger.<sup>2</sup> Under the federal bribery statute, it is illegal to corruptly give anything of value to public officials to influence an official act.<sup>3</sup> If Paramount officials make these concessions in a quid pro quo arrangement to influence President Trump or other Administration officials, they may be breaking the law. We request information regarding whether Paramount is making concessions to President Trump in exchange for favorable action by his Administration.

In October 2024, President Trump, in his capacity as a private citizen, sued Paramount subsidiary CBS over alleged “partisan and unlawful acts of election and voter interference.”<sup>4</sup> According to Trump, CBS purposefully edited its 60 Minutes interview with presidential candidate Vice President Kamala Harris in a manner that unfairly boosted Harris’s presidential campaign. CBS responded that Trump’s claims were “false,” and that the lawsuit was “completely without merit and [the network would] vigorously defend against it.”<sup>5</sup> In March 2025, CBS filed a motion to dismiss the lawsuit, calling the suit “an affront to the First Amendment and ... without basis in law or fact.”<sup>6</sup> Legal experts have affirmed this position, calling Trump’s lawsuit a “misapplication” of the law and an “outrageous violation of First Amendment principles.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Guardian, “Host of CBS’s 60 Minutes rebukes corporate owners Paramount on-air,” Jessica Glenza, April 28, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2025/apr/28/cbs-60-minutes-paramount-scott-pelley>.

<sup>2</sup> CBS News, “A statement from 60 Minutes,” October 31, 2024, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/a-statement-from-60-minutes/>; Politico, “‘60 Minutes’ calls out ownership on air,” David Cohen, April 27, 2025, <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/04/27/60-minutes-calls-out-paramount-on-air-00312122>.

<sup>3</sup> 18 U.S.C. 201.

<sup>4</sup> Trump v. CBS Broadcasting Inc., p. 1, <https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/69332852/1/trump-v-cbs-broadcasting-inc/>.

<sup>5</sup> CBS News, “A statement from 60 Minutes,” October 31, 2024, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/a-statement-from-60-minutes/>.

<sup>6</sup> The Guardian, “Paramount files to dismiss Trump’s ‘baseless’ \$20bn 60 Minutes suit,” Marina Dunbar, March 7, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/mar/07/paramount-cbs-60-minutes-trump-lawsuit>.

<sup>7</sup> CBS News, “Trump sues CBS News over 60 Minutes interview with Harris; network says suit is ‘completely without merit’,” October 31, 2024, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-sues-cbs-news-60-minutes-interview/>.

Now, Paramount appears to be walking back its commitments to defend CBS's First Amendment rights. Months before Trump sued CBS, Paramount and Skydance announced an agreement to merge for \$8 billion.<sup>8</sup> Because the merger will involve the transfer of ownership of CBS broadcast licenses, the Trump Administration's Federal Communications Commission (FCC) must review the deal and has an opportunity to block it.<sup>9</sup> Paramount appears to be attempting to appease the Administration in order to secure merger approval. FCC Chair Brendan Carr stated President Trump's CBS lawsuit was "likely to arise in the context of the FCC review of [the Paramount-Skydance] transaction," and Paramount is reportedly in talks to settle the lawsuit.<sup>10</sup> President Trump may personally profit from the settlement, as the suit seeks damages for Trump himself, rather than his campaign.<sup>11</sup> Then-candidate Trump originally sought \$10 billion in damages, and then increased the number to \$20 billion after he took office in 2025.<sup>12</sup> Paramount's lawyers appear to be in negotiations to lower the amount.<sup>13</sup>

In addition, Paramount appears to have begun overseeing CBS's content, presumably in order to screen it for content that could anger the Trump Administration. A 60 Minutes correspondent told viewers, "our parent company Paramount is trying to complete a merger. The Trump Administration must approve it. Paramount began to supervise our content in new ways."<sup>14</sup> In addition, reports have surfaced that Paramount "decided to delay and significantly alter" a Daily Show project to encourage civic participation across the country, "noting internally that the associations with partisan groups carried too much risk at a moment when Trump and his [FCC] have been criticizing coverage at ... CBS News."<sup>15</sup> CBS's content moderation has prompted network executives to resign from their positions. Last month, 60 Minutes executive producer Bill Owens resigned from the program, telling staff, "over the past months, it has become clear that I would not be allowed to run the show as I have always run it, to make independent decisions based on what was right for '60 Minutes,' right for the audience."<sup>16</sup> At the time, President of CBS News and Stations Wendy McMahon praised Owens' decision, and just this week, she, too abruptly announced she was stepping down from her role at CBS, saying, "it's

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<sup>8</sup> Paramount, "Skydance Media and Paramount Global Sign Definitive Agreement to Advance Paramount as a World-Class Media and Technology Enterprise," press release, July 7, 2024, <https://ir.paramount.com/news-releases/news-release-details/skydance-media-and-paramount-global-sign-definitive-agreement>.

<sup>9</sup> Federal Communications Commission, "Skydance Media and Paramount Global, MB Docket No. 24-275," <https://www.fcc.gov/transaction/skydance-paramount>.

<sup>10</sup> New York Post, "Trump's FCC pick Brendan Carr says '60 Minutes' editing scandal could affect Paramount-Skydance merger review," Taylor Herzlich, November 20, 2024, <https://nypost.com/2024/11/20/business/brendan-carr-says-60-minutes-editing-scandal-could-affect-paramount-skydance-merger/>.

<sup>11</sup> Trump v. CBS Broadcasting Inc., Amended Complaint, February 7, 2025, p. 57, <https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/69332852/36/trump-v-cbs-broadcasting-inc/>.

<sup>12</sup> Axios, "CBS moves to dismiss \$20 billion Trump lawsuit," Sara Fischer, May 6, 2025, <https://www.axios.com/2025/03/06/cbs-files-to-dismiss-trump-lawsuit>.

<sup>13</sup> Los Angeles Times, "Trump amends CBS '60 Minutes' lawsuit and demands \$20 billion," Meg James, February 8, 2025, <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/business/story/2025-02-08/trump-amends-cbs-60-minutes-lawsuit-demands-20-billion>; Variety, "Shari Redstone's Impossible Choice: She Can't Save Both '60 Minutes' and Paramount Global," Brian Steinberg, May 2, 2025, <https://variety.com/2025/tv/news/shari-redstone-impossible-choice-60-minutes-paramount-1236384851/>.

<sup>14</sup> Deadline, "'60 Minutes' Does Segment Explaining Departure Of Executive Producer Bill Owens: 'Paramount Began To Supervise Our Content In New Ways'," Ted Johnson, April 27, 2025, <https://deadline.com/2025/04/60-minutes-bill-owens-cbs-trump-1236378451/>.

<sup>15</sup> Semafor, "Paramount cuts ties with political groups working on 'Daily Show' project," Max Tani, May 4, 2025, <https://www.semafor.com/article/05/04/2025/paramount-cuts-ties-with-political-groups-working-on-daily-show-project>.

<sup>16</sup> The New York Times, "'60 Minutes' Chief Resigns in Emotional Meeting: 'The Company Is Done With Me'," Michael M. Grynbaum and Benjamin Mullin, April 22, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/22/business/media/cbs-60-minutes-trump-bill-owens.html>.

become clear that the company and I do not agree on the path forward.”<sup>17</sup> Paramount’s scheme to curry favor with the Trump Administration has compromised journalistic independence and raises serious concerns of corruption and improper conduct.

Paramount’s apparent capitulation to President Trump is a sharp contrast from its earlier position that it would “vigorously defend against” the lawsuit. To help determine whether Paramount is acting in accordance with our nation’s anti-bribery laws and maintaining journalistic integrity, we ask that you answer the following questions by June 2, 2025:

1. Does Paramount believe the lawsuit filed by then-candidate Trump against CBS has merit?
2. Have you, any other executives, and/or Board Members discussed settling the lawsuit? If so, please provide information regarding the timing, nature of, and participants in these discussions, including whether the pending merger with Skydance was discussed.
3. Has Paramount evaluated the risk of shareholder derivative litigation from settling the lawsuit?
4. Please describe any changes to Paramount’s mediation of 60 Minutes content made to facilitate approval of Paramount’s pending merger with Skydance.
5. Has 60 Minutes made changes to its content at the request of anyone at Paramount to facilitate approval of the merger?
6. Will Paramount request 60 Minutes to change its content in any way to facilitate approval of the merger? Please describe in what ways.
7. What other actions is Paramount taking to facilitate approval of its pending merger with Skydance?
8. Specifically, have Paramount officials discussed settling the lawsuit or making other concessions with President Trump or Trump Administration officials in the context of the merger approval?
9. Does Paramount have any policies and procedures related to compliance with 18 U.S.C. 201 and any other laws governing public corruption? If so, please provide a copy of those policies and procedures.

Sincerely,



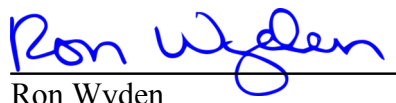
Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator

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<sup>17</sup> The New York Times, “Head of CBS News to Depart Amid Tensions With Trump,” Michael M. Grynbaum, Benjamin Mullin and Lauren Hirsch, May 19, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/19/business/media/cbs-60-minutes-trump-wendy-mcmahon.html>.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ron Wyden". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ron" and last name "Wyden" clearly distinguishable. A horizontal line is drawn across the page just below the signature.

Ron Wyden

United States Senator