

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 21, 2025

David Ellison
CEO
Skydance Media
2900 Olympic Blvd
Santa Monica, CA 90404

Dear Mr. Ellison:

We write with questions about Skydance Media's reported secret side deal with President Trump that appears to be connected to Paramount Global's efforts to settle President Trump's lawsuit against CBS and secure approval for its mega-merger with Skydance.¹

In October 2024, President Trump, in his capacity as a private citizen, sued Paramount's subsidiary CBS over how it allegedly edited a 60 Minutes interview with presidential candidate Vice President Kamala Harris — which Trump claimed were “partisan and unlawful acts of election and voter interference.”² CBS has maintained that Trump's lawsuit is “completely without merit.”³ The suit was filed after Paramount announced a proposed \$8 billion merger with Skydance.⁴ Because the proposed deal involves the transfer of CBS broadcast licenses, President Trump's Federal Communications Commission must approve the deal before it can proceed.⁵

In May 2025, following reports of possible settlement discussions, we wrote to Paramount regarding concerns that the company's attempt to settle the “meritless”⁶ lawsuit on terms favorable to President Trump could be construed as bribery.⁷ We warned Paramount that under

¹ New York Post, “How secret ‘side deal’ helped seal Paramount's \$16M settlement with Trump — and here's who deserves the credit,” Charles Gasparino, July 2, 2025, <https://nypost.com/2025/07/02/media/how-secret-side-deal-helped-seal-paramounts-16m-settlement-with-trump/>.

² Trump v. CBS Broadcasting Inc., p. 1, <https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/69332852/1/trump-v-cbs-broadcasting-inc/>.

³ CBS News, “A statement from 60 Minutes,” October 31, 2024, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/a-statement-from-60-minutes/>.

⁴ 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>.

⁵ Federal Communications Commission, “Skydance Media and Paramount Global, MB Docket No. 24-275,” <https://www.fcc.gov/transaction/skydance-paramount>.

⁶ The Washington Post, “CBS owner Paramount settles Trump lawsuit over Harris interview for \$16M,” Jeremy Barr, July 2, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/style/media/2025/07/02/paramount-cbs-settlement-trump-harris-interview/>.

⁷ Letter from Senator Elizabeth Warren, Senator Bernie Sanders, and Senator Ron Wyden to Paramount Chair Shari Redstone, May 19, 2025, https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/letter_to_paramount_re_cbs_lawsuit_and_corruption.pdf.

the federal bribery statute, it is illegal to corruptly give anything of value to federal officials to influence an official act⁸ — and if Paramount settles the lawsuit in a quid-pro-quo arrangement to influence the Administration’s assessment of the Paramount-Skydance deal, company officials could be breaking the law.⁹ Nevertheless, on July 2, 2025, Paramount settled with President Trump for \$16 million.¹⁰ Under the reported terms of the agreement, Paramount will pay Trump’s legal fees, and the remainder of the settlement will go toward his presidential library fund.¹¹ This settlement came amid reports that “Paramount’s board was concerned that paying [an amount higher than the \$16 million ABC News agreed to pay Mr. Trump in December 2024] to settle the case could increase the company’s exposure to potential legal actions from shareholders accusing it of bribery.”¹²

President Trump himself, however, apparently revealed that the arrangement is worth more than the initially reported \$16 million — reporting suggests the Paramount settlement arrangement may involve an additional back-door deal with President Trump.¹³ President Trump has stated that the settlement was worth “about \$16 million plus 16 million, or maybe more than that in advertising... So it’s like \$32 [million] to maybe \$35 million.”¹⁴ This admission appears to corroborate reporting that claims you reached a “side deal” with the President, the terms of which involve CBS airing public service announcements “and other broadcast transmissions” worth between \$15 million and \$20 million that “support conservative causes supported by President Trump.”¹⁵ The nature and existence of this arrangement are uncertain, with at least one anonymous source calling the reports “false.”¹⁶

On July 17, CBS announced it was canceling *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, the most-watched show on late night television.¹⁷ CBS announced this decision just three days after Colbert criticized Paramount’s \$16 million settlement with President Trump on his show, saying the deal resembled bribery.¹⁸

⁸ 18 U.S.C. 201.

⁹ Letter from Senator Elizabeth Warren, Senator Bernie Sanders, and Senator Ron Wyden to Paramount Chair Shari Redstone, May 19, 2025,

https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/letter_to_paramount_re_cbs_lawsuit_and_corruption.pdf.

¹⁰ The New York Times, “Paramount to Pay Trump \$16 Million to Settle ‘60 Minutes’ Lawsuit,” Benjamin Mullin, Michael M. Grynbaum, Lauren Hirsch, and David Enrich, July 2, 2025,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/02/business/media/paramount-trump-60-minutes-lawsuit.html>.

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.*

¹³ The Independent, “Trump claims he struck side deal with Skydance for additional \$16 million in ‘60 Minutes’ settlement,” Justin Baragona, July 7, 2025,

<https://www.the-independent.com/news/world/americas/us-politics/trump-60-minutes-settlement-skydance-cbs-b2784130.html>.

¹⁴ Variety, “Trump Claims ‘60 Minutes’ Settlement Is Worth as Much as \$35 Million Including ‘Advertising’; Paramount Denies Deal Includes PSAs,” Todd Spangler, July 4, 2025, <https://variety.com/2025/tv/news/trump-60-minutes-lawsuit-settlement-advertising-35-million-paramount-psa-1236447353/>.

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *Id.*


¹⁷ The New York Times, “CBS Canceling ‘Late Show With Stephen Colbert’ After Next Season,” John Koblin, July 17, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/17/business/stephen-colbert-late-show-ending.html>.

These reports raise fresh questions about corruption in the Trump Administration and President Trump's willingness to accept payments from entities with significant policy interests before agencies he controls. To understand the nature of any payments to President Trump, and whether these payments comply with our nation's anti-bribery laws, we ask that you answer the following questions by August 4, 2025:

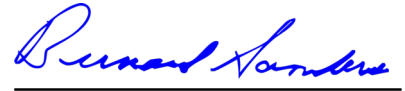
1. Is there currently any arrangement under which you or Skydance will provide compensation, advertising, or promotional activities that in any way assist President Trump, his family, his presidential library, or other Administration officials?
 - a. If so, what is the nature of this arrangement? What will you or Skydance provide, and what have you discussed receiving in return from the Trump Administration?
 - b. Have any Skydance board members been involved in any of these discussions, or have you been involved in these discussions only in your personal capacity?
2. Have you personally discussed with President Trump, any of his family members, any Trump Administration officials, or presidential library fund personnel any matters related to the Paramount-Skydance transaction? If so, what was the nature of these discussions?
3. Were you or any other Skydance executives involved in discussions about settling President Trump's lawsuit against CBS? If so, please provide information regarding the timing, nature of, and participants in these discussions, including whether the pending transaction with Paramount was discussed.
4. Has Skydance agreed or have you personally agreed to make changes to Skydance's content or Paramount's or CBS's content at the request of the Trump Administration, to facilitate approval of the transaction? If so, please describe those requests.
5. Were you or other Skydance executives involved in discussions about canceling The Late Show with Stephen Colbert? If so, please provide information regarding the timing, nature of, and participants in these discussions, including whether the pending transaction with Paramount was discussed.
6. Does Skydance have any policies, procedures, or guidance related to compliance with 18 U.S.C. 201 or any other laws governing public corruption? If so, please provide a copy of those policies and procedures.
7. Does Skydance conduct any trainings for its staff or executives related to compliance with 18 U.S.C. 201 or any other laws governing public corruption? If so, please provide details regarding these trainings.

¹⁸ AP News, "Stephen Colbert's 'Late Show' is canceled by CBS and will end in May 2026," David Bauder, Alicia Rancilio, and Andrew Dalton, July 18, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/stephen-colbert-late-show-cbs-end-8bad9f16f076df62c0ffc50e9c8adbab>.

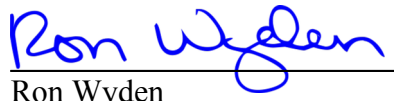
Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator