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United States Senate

March 19, 2018

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The Honorable John Thune
Chairman
Committee on Commerce, Science,
and Transportation
512 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Nelson
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science,
and Transportation
716 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Thune and Ranking Member Nelson,

I write to respectfully request that the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation hold a hearing on the reported use of over 50 million Facebook users' private information by the firm Cambridge Analytica. Today, Americans' personal data online is a valuable commodity for commercial and political interests alike. As companies seek information about internet users' behavior in order to gain insights that may inform strategic decision-making, Americans' online privacy has become increasingly vulnerable.

According to reports in the *New York Times* and *The Observer of London*, as early as 2014, Cambridge Analytica began working to acquire the private information of over 50 million Facebook users for the purpose of building profiles of American voters and selling that information to political campaigns.¹ Notably, these reports indicate that only a fraction of the users in question had given consent for their information to be shared with a third party.

In light of these allegations, and the ongoing Federal Trade Commission (FTC) consent decree that requires Facebook to obtain explicit permission before sharing data about its users, the Committee should move quickly to hold a hearing on this incident which has allegedly violated the privacy of tens of millions of Americans.

¹ Rosenberg, Matthew, Nicholas Confessore and Carole Cadwalladr. "How Trump Consultants Exploited the Facebook Data of Millions." *New York Times*, 17 March, 2018.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/17/us/politics/cambridge-analytica-trump-campaign.html>

I thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Edward J. Markey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the text.

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator