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United States Senate

September 5, 2019

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Mr. Jeffrey Bezos
Chief Executive Officer
Amazon.com, Inc.
410 Terry Avenue N.
Seattle, WA 98109

Dear Mr. Bezos:

I write regarding reports that Ring has partnered with over 400 police departments and offered access to video footage captured by Ring's millions of internet-connected doorbells.¹ Although innovative approaches by law enforcement to keep neighborhoods safe and combat crime are encouraged and welcome, the nature of Ring's products and its partnerships with police departments raise serious privacy and civil liberties concerns.

Ring products allow users to view live video feeds from their doorbell cameras, and Ring's social network gives users a platform to share that video footage and discuss activity they deem suspicious.² According to a recent report in the *Washington Post*, Ring uses targeted language to encourage users to grant the police access to doorbell video footage, proactively courts law enforcement partners, and urges the police to take steps that will increase rates of video sharing.³ These findings are particularly troubling in light of Amazon's reported marketing of the facial recognition product, Rekognition, to local police departments.⁴

Although Amazon markets Ring as America's "new neighborhood watch,"⁵ the technology captures and stores video from millions of households and sweeps up footage of countless bystanders who may be unaware that they are being filmed. Additionally, although Ring does not appear to share users' footage without receiving permission, the language Ring uses prompting users to grant this consent — "If you would like to take direct action to make your neighborhood

¹ Drew Harwell, *Doorbell-Camera Firm Ring Has Partnered With 400 Police Forces, Extending Surveillance Concerns*, *Washington Post* (August 28, 2019), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2019/08/28/doorbell-camera-firm-ring-has-partnered-with-police-forces-extending-surveillance-reach/>.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ Nick Wingfield, *Amazon Pushes Facial Recognition to Police. Critics See Surveillance Risk*, *New York Times* (May 22, 2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/22/technology/amazon-facial-recognition.html>.

⁵ *Neighbors by Ring*, <https://shop.ring.com/pages/neighbors> (last visited August 29, 2019).

safer, this is a great opportunity,” according to the *Washington Post* — is at a minimum leading.⁶ Amazon should thoroughly review the process of obtaining consent to ensure that, when your customers opt-in to this program, they do so on a truly voluntary basis.

The scope and nature of Ring’s partnership with police forces raise additional civil liberties concerns. The integration of Ring’s network of cameras with law enforcement offices could easily create a surveillance network that places dangerous burdens on people of color and feeds racial anxieties in local communities. I am particularly alarmed to learn that Ring is pursuing facial recognition technology with the potential to flag certain individuals as suspicious based on their biometric information.⁷ In light of evidence that existing facial recognition technology disproportionately misidentifies African Americans and Latinos,⁸ a product like this has the potential to catalyze racial profiling and harm people of color.

Therefore, I request written answers to the following questions by September 26, 2019:

1. How long has Ring prompted its users to share video footage with law enforcement entities? Please provide a detailed timeline of when this sharing began and how, if at all, Ring has changed its policies surrounding this sharing over time.
2. Please provide a list of all law enforcement entities — including local police departments and federal agencies — that have had or currently have access to video footage from Ring products. Please provide a copy of a standard video-footage-sharing agreement between Ring and a local police department.
3. Does Ring require police department partners to delete users’ footage after a certain amount of time? If not, why not?
4. Does Ring require police department partners to institute security safeguards to ensure that the Ring footage to which they have access is not breached or otherwise accessed by unauthorized entities? If so, please describe these security requirements. If not, why not?
5. Does Ring prohibit police department partners with access to users’ footage from sharing that footage with other entities? If not, why not? Is Ring aware of any instances in which police department partners have shared users’ footage with third parties? If so, please describe in detail all such instances.
6. Will Ring commit to reviewing its consent prompts for video-footage sharing in consultation with experts and making any necessary revisions to ensure that Ring does not use manipulative or coercive language with its users?
7. What steps has Ring taken to ensure that its internet-connected doorbells and its social network, Neighbors, do not contribute to racial profiling by law enforcement or Ring users?

⁶ Drew Harwell, *Doorbell-Camera Firm Ring Has Partnered With 400 Police Forces, Extending Surveillance Concerns*, *Washington Post* (August 28, 2019), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2019/08/28/doorbell-camera-firm-ring-has-partnered-with-police-forces-extending-surveillance-reach/>.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Natasha Singer, *Amazon’s Facial Recognition Wrongly Identifies 28 Lawmakers, A.C.L.U. Says*, *New York Times* (July 26, 2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/26/technology/amazon-aciu-facial-recognition-congress.html>.

8. Has Ring consulted with experts in civil liberties, criminal justice, and other relevant fields to conduct a review of its internet-connected doorbells and its social network, Neighbors, to ensure that these offerings do not present unique threats to people of color or other populations? If not, why not? If yes, please share the list of consulted parties.
9. Please describe in detail Ring's plans to add facial recognition capabilities to its products, including any potential timeline.
10. Please describe any plans to coordinate law enforcement's use of Amazon's Rekognition product with forthcoming facial recognition offerings from Ring.

Thank you in advance for your attention to these requests.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator