

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 9, 2019

COMMITTEES
APPROPRIATIONS
FOREIGN RELATIONS
SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE
SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

The Honorable Steven Mnuchin
Secretary
U.S. Department of Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20220

Dear Secretary Mnuchin:

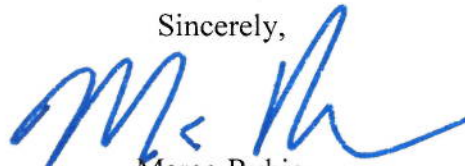
I write to express concern with regard to Chinese influence operations, including by the social media network, TikTok, a short-video app owned by the Chinese backed, ByteDance. According to reports, TikTok acquired Musical.ly, a video-sharing platform, without any oversight and relaunched the service for Western markets. These Chinese-owned apps are increasingly being used to censor content and silence open discussion on topics deemed sensitive by the Chinese Government and Communist Party. These topics include Tiananmen Square, Tibet, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and other issues. I therefore request the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) to exercise its authority and launch a full review of the national security implications of TikTok's acquisition of Musical.ly.

TikTok, which has millions of active users across the U.S., is now ranked among the world's most downloaded apps. There continues to be ample and growing evidence that TikTok's platform for Western markets, including those in the U.S., is censoring content that is not in line with the Chinese Government and Communist Party directives. Last month, it was reported that TikTok instructed its moderators to actively censor certain videos. This came after questions as to why the app only had a few videos of the Hong Kong protests that have been dominating international headlines for months. The Chinese government's nefarious efforts to censor information inside free societies around the world cannot be accepted and pose serious long-term challenges to the U.S. and our allies.

CFIUS should be commended for its recent work in this space against Beijing Kunlun Tech Co Ltd, which took majority ownership of a dating app that contained user's personal and sensitive data. Without intervention, there is no saying how this information would have been used by the Chinese government. What is known, the government of China is using these apps to advance their foreign policy and globally suppress freedom of speech, expression, and other freedoms that we as Americans so deeply cherish. Given the Chinese Government and Communist Party efforts to block content and undermine U.S. values, I urge that CFIUS launch a full and thorough national security review of TikTok's acquisition of Musical.ly.

I appreciate your attention to this important matter and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator