

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

August 20, 2025

Mr. David Ellison
CEO
Paramount Skydance Corporation
1515 Broadway
New York, NY 10036

Dear Mr. Ellison:

Four weeks ago, after months of delay, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) approved what on August 7, 2025, became an \$8 billion merger between your company, Skydance Media, LLC (Skydance), and Paramount Global (Paramount).¹ Alarming, the FCC's decision came only after Skydance and Paramount agreed to provide millions of dollars in payments and free services to Donald Trump himself and millions to support his future presidential library respectively. Further, as a condition of the merger, it appears Skydance has agreed to install someone to police CBS's editorial decisions, promising to conduct a "comprehensive review of CBS" and to appoint an "ombudsman" to root out "bias."

Recent reporting and statements by President Trump indicate that you offered to provide President Trump with free access to between \$15 and \$20 million worth of public service announcements (PSAs) in exchange for FCC's approval of the merger.² In the days and weeks leading up to government approval of the deal, Paramount also agreed to pay \$16 million to settle President Trump's meritless lawsuit related to benign edits of an episode of "60 Minutes"—a standard editorial practice—which the FCC also investigated without any legitimate regulatory basis.³ The settlement raises significant concerns that Donald Trump demanded and Paramount paid an illegal bribe—a \$16 million payment to the President in exchange for merger approval from the FCC.⁴ Paramount also canceled the highly popular "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert," which President Trump openly dislikes, shortly after Mr. Colbert's on-air criticism of Paramount's settlement as a "big fat bribe."⁵ As a condition of the merger, Skydance also agreed to make changes to CBS and its editorial practices that align with

¹ Federal Communications Commission, *FCC Approves Skydance's Acquisition of Paramount CBS* (July 2025) (<https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-approves-skydances-acquisition-paramount-cbs>); *FCC Approves \$8 Billion Paramount-Skydance Merger After Lengthy Review*, The Washington Post (July 24, 2025).

² Notably, this appears to be a second inducement in addition to Paramount's lawsuit settlement as Paramount spokespeople have insisted on having no knowledge of the terms of that agreement. *Trump Nods to Side Deal With Ellisons, Says '60 Minutes' Settlement Includes Additional \$16 Million in Advertising*, The Wrap (July 7, 2025).

³ *Trump Celebrates \$16 Million '60 Minutes' Settlement—And Suggests He'll Get Another \$20 Million, Too*, Forbes (July 22, 2025).

⁴ *Writers Guild Demands Investigation Into Stephen Colbert 'Late Show' Cancellation, Has 'Significant Concerns' About Bribery at Paramount*, Variety (July 18, 2025); *Paramount Has Offered \$15 Million to Settle CBS Lawsuit. Trump Wants More*, The Wall Street Journal (May 28, 2025).

⁵ *CBS Canceling 'The Late Show with Stephen Colbert' After Next Season*, New York Times (July 17, 2025).

the Trump Administration's political agenda, including a commitment to eliminate "perceived bias" in its reporting, the hiring of an ombudsman to police the news organization's editorial choices, and the dismantling of any initiatives aimed at promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion.⁶ Further, the announcement of onboarding a new ombudsman to "root out" such politicization is a poorly disguised attempt at censoring speech that contradicts the Administration's ideals.⁷ We write today to demand information and answers regarding these suspicious and troubling transactions.

Since taking office, FCC Chairman Brendan Carr has engaged in unprecedented and dangerous political attacks on media organizations in total disregard of the First Amendment.⁸ His review of the proposed merger and license transfer between Paramount and Skydance, announced last year, exceeded the FCC's customary 180-day timeline, instead holding up the deal for more than 250 days with no clear explanation for the delay.⁹ Chairman Carr's stalling tactics dovetailed with a \$20 billion lawsuit then-candidate Trump brought last October against Paramount's subsidiary, CBS News, later adding Paramount as a defendant and succeeded in pressuring the parties to offer payoffs to President Trump to further his personal interests, with Skydance apparently entering into a "side deal" with President Trump to secure support for the FCC's approval of the merger.¹⁰

While Skydance has repeatedly refused to publicly disclose the substance of the "side deal," there is evidence that you had multiple conversations with the President leading up to the deal being approved by the FCC.¹¹ For instance, public reporting and documents filed in the FCC record for the deal indicate that you spoke to President Trump at length at UFC events on April 12, 2025, and June 7, 2025.¹² Shortly after the April 12 meeting, longtime "60 Minutes" producer, Bill Owens, resigned citing interference from company executives.¹³ And within days of your June 7 meeting, President Trump endorsed your bid to purchase Paramount.¹⁴ Moreover,

⁶ *Skydance Informs Trump's FCC It Will Eliminate DEI at Paramount, Create CBS News Ombudsman Following Merger*, Fox Business (July 23, 2025).

⁷ *Skydance Says Ombudsman Will Monitor Bias Concerns at CBS News*, Bloomberg (July 23, 2025).

⁸ House Committee on Energy and Commerce, *E&C Democrats Launch Investigation into FCC Chairman Carr's Repeated Attacks on the First Amendment* (Mar. 31, 2025) (press release).

⁹ Federal Communications Commission, *Skydance Media and Paramount Global*, MB Docket No. 24-275 (<https://www.fcc.gov/transaction/skydance-paramount>) (accessed June 18, 2025).

¹⁰ *Trump Sues CBS Over Kamala Harris '60 Minutes' Interview*, Reuters (Oct. 31, 2024); Meg James, *Trump Amends CBS '60 Minutes' Lawsuit And Demands \$20 Billion*, Los Angeles Times (Feb. 8, 2025).

¹¹ *The Paramount PSA Origin Story*, Status (July 24, 2025).

¹² *Trump Says David Ellison Is 'Great, He'll Do a Great Job' Running Merged Skydance-Paramount, as FCC Deal Approval Is Still Pending*, Variety (June 18, 2025); LiveVideo.AI Corp Notice of Ex Parte Communication (June 16, 2025) *Skydance Media and Paramount Global*, FCC (MB Docket No. 24-275).

¹³ *'60 Minutes' Chief Resigns in Emotional Meeting: 'The Company Is Done With Me'*, New York Times (Apr. 22, 2025).

¹⁴ *Trump Has Kind Words for David Ellison's Paramount Deal, Even As He Rips CBS News*, The Hollywood Reporter (June 18, 2025).

your father, Larry Ellison, who contributed up to \$6 billion toward your purchase of Paramount, reportedly met privately with President Trump multiple times in recent months.¹⁵ Notably, none of these meetings were memorialized with filings in the FCC’s docket on this transaction, prompting objections from other parties in the record.¹⁶

President Trump himself disclosed some details about the side deal, boasting that he “anticipate[s] receiving \$20 Million Dollars more from the new Owners, in Advertising, PSAs, or similar Programming.”¹⁷ This offer was necessarily contingent on the FCC approving the deal and does not appear to present any legitimate value to the public, only to President Trump. Therefore, this appears to be an offer of payment and benefits to a government official designed to achieve a specific outcome from the government—in other words, a bribe. Both the Transaction Agreement and the Purchase and Sale Agreement between Paramount and Skydance filed with the FCC contain numerous clauses intended to prevent bribery and corruption and multiple conditions and declarations stating that none of the parties have engaged in such practices.¹⁸ Given your actions, it is difficult to see how those agreements have not already been breached.

In addition, Skydance has proposed making changes to CBS that align with the Trump Administration’s political agenda, including removing initiatives aimed at promoting diversity, equity, or inclusion and making a commitment to eliminate “perceived bias” in its reporting.¹⁹ As mentioned above, Skydance also announced a new ombudsman whose job is apparently to censor speech that the Administration dislikes.²⁰ These and other changes, made with the pretext to “generate significant efficiencies” appear to actually be blatant attempts to placate the President and exacerbate our concerns about bribery and corruption associated with the approval of this deal.²¹

Paramount’s recent agreement to pay \$16 million to settle President Trump’s sham lawsuit against its subsidiary CBS News, a suit that has been described by one legal scholar as “so ill grounded that it comes close to being sanctionable,” is another egregious example of apparently paying off the President to close this deal.²² Skydance’s own statement earlier this year called objections to the merger on the basis of CBS’s alleged “ideological bias and news

¹⁵ *I Now Pronounce You Donald & Larry*, Puck (June 25, 2025); *Larry Ellison's Family Investing \$6 Billion into Paramount Deal*, Axios (July 8, 2024).

¹⁶ See note 12.

¹⁷ Donald J. Trump (@realdonaldtrump), Truth Social (July 22, 2025, 2:10pm) (<https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/114898229237459086>).

¹⁸ Exhibit C-1, Sections 3.16, 4.15; Exhibit C-2, Article III, Section 3.18, Purchase and Sale Agreement Public Interest Statement and Exhibits at <https://www.fcc.gov/transaction/skydance-paramount>.

¹⁹ See note 6.

²⁰ See note 7.

²¹ See note 6.

²² See note 10.

manipulation” “baseless,” “lack merit,” and “raise[] constitutional concerns.”²³ For both Paramount and Skydance to acquiesce to President Trump’s meritless claims in order to consummate the merger demonstrates an extreme disregard to anything that might stand in the way of profit.

As part of our mandate to conduct congressional oversight, we will continue to scrutinize the connection between Skydance’s offers made to the President prior to closing the deal, Paramount’s settlement of a sham lawsuit that enriches the President, and regulatory approval of the merger. We will also continue to examine Paramount Skydance Corporation’s implementation and the FCC’s enforcement, under Chairman Carr’s leadership, of the merger conditions, with a special focus on any actions that appear to exceed the agency’s statutory authority.

Two wrongs do not make a right—illegitimate demands from the FCC or the Administration do not absolve your company from wrongdoing. If Skydance offered a side deal of up to \$20 million worth of advertisement or programming to President Trump in order to receive regulatory approval for the merger with Paramount, these actions would run afoul of federal and state anti-bribery statutes. Similarly, if Paramount forced out CBS’s longtime leaders, spent \$16 million to settle a sham lawsuit with President Trump, or canceled a highly popular comedy show that President Trump dislikes in order to curry favor with the Administration and to receive regulatory approval for the merger with Skydance, these actions would likely further embolden President Trump to use lawsuits and regulatory authority to attack media organizations that he finds objectionable in order to silence them. These actions by Paramount would also be illegal, running afoul of federal and state anti-bribery statutes.

Accordingly, we request answers to the following questions by September 3, 2025.

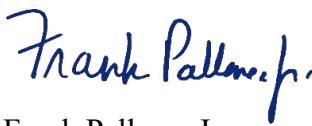
1. Please provide a copy of the settlement between Skydance or Paramount and President Trump and a copy of all related communications involving the President, employees or representatives of the White House or the FCC, employees or representatives of the Trump Organization, or any other individual acting on behalf of Donald Trump or the Trump Organization.
2. Please confirm that you or a representative acting on behalf of Skydance offered President Trump or his representative advertising, public service announcements, or other programming. If so, please describe the amount that was offered and any conditions for such programming.
3. Please provide a copy of all communications between Skydance or Paramount and the President, employees or representatives of the White House, or employees or representatives of the Trump Organization related to the proposed merger between Paramount and Skydance.

²³ *Skydance, Paramount Urge FCC to Reject ‘Baseless’ Petition by Conservative Group Seeking Conditions to Address CBS News’ Alleged ‘Ideological Bias and News Manipulation’*, Variety (Jan. 3, 2025).

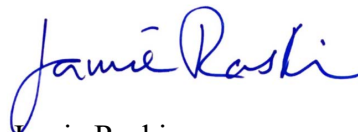
4. Please provide a detailed description of the substance of your conversations with President Trump on April 12, 2025, and July 7, 2025, and any other conversations you had with the President or other government representatives during the pendency of the merger between Skydance and Paramount.
5. Please provide all internal communications and documentation related to settlement terms, side agreements, or policy changes, including correspondence between Paramount and Skydance or any due diligence conducted by Skydance or Paramount during the pendency of the transaction that relate to any actions intended to improve the probability of merger approval, including but not limited to future public service announcements, advertising, or other programming; the termination, cancellation, or non-renewal of any employee or programming; or the reviewing or monitoring or altering of the content of any programming due to its viewpoint.
6. Please provide all communications and documentation between anyone employed by or representing Skydance or Paramount and anyone employed by or representing the FCC related to the approval of the merger between Paramount and Skydance that refer—directly or indirectly—to President Trump’s lawsuit against CBS, FCC’s news distortion investigation, or any side agreements between these parties that were undertaken in conjunction with the resolution of the merger, President Trump’s lawsuit or the news distortion investigation.

If you have any questions about this request, please contact the Energy and Commerce Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-2927 or the House Judiciary Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-3951.

Sincerely,



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member
House Committee on Energy and Commerce



Jamie Raskin
Ranking Member
House Committee on the Judiciary