



July 9, 2020

Honorable James E. Risch
Chairman
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
423 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Bob Menendez
Ranking Member
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
423 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Risch and Ranking Member Menendez:

The App Coalition, whose mission is to promote the global app economy and ensure that the more than three billion users around the globe have unfettered access to the content of their choosing, is deeply concerned by recent decisions by the new CEO of the United States Agency for Global Media (USAGM) that seem to undermine the Open Technology Fund (OTF). Today, hundreds of millions of app users across all nations benefit from the work and open-source technology supported by the OTF. Specifically, we are very concerned with USAGM CEO Michael Pack's decision to remove key personnel at the OTF. As the Committee with jurisdiction over USAGM, we urge you to convene an oversight hearing to have Mr. Pack provide answers to the questions and concerns that numerous members of Congress have expressed regarding his actions. The future of the exemplary work of OTF is at risk.

Freedom of speech and expression are essential to establishing and maintaining a functioning democracy. Since its establishment, the OTF has been instrumental in fostering democracy by providing tools to help those living under authoritarian regimes access the internet and communicate with one another without fear of retribution from those governments. Its funding provides essential resources for the development of open-source security tools to protect citizens living under these regimes whose activities are perceived as threatening.

OTF's work demands that its staff and board have an understanding of both policy and technology to further its efforts. With the recent firings, that ability has been called into question. To ensure taxpayer dollars are not wasted, that the lives of those that rely on OTF's technology are not put at risk, and that the app economy, an increasingly core component of free speech globally, continues to flourish, we respectfully request the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee to exercise its oversight function by calling Mr. Pack to testify on the rationale behind these actions and the plan forward for OTF.

Regards,

Eric Silverberg
President, App Coalition