

# Congress of the United States

## Washington, DC 20515

January 23, 2023

President Jay O. Rothman  
1720 Van Hise Hall  
1220 Linden Drive  
Madison, WI 53706

Dear President Rothman,

Earlier this month, we were pleased to see Governor Tony Evers respond to our call to ban TikTok on state-issued devices. However, we were disappointed that this ban did not extend to University of Wisconsin System (UW System) devices. Given the widespread recognition that TikTok poses a national security threat, we urge you to ban TikTok from UW System devices and block it from UW System Wi-Fi and wired networks.

TikTok is controlled by Chinese parent ByteDance, which is controlled by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).<sup>1</sup> The CCP can use TikTok to gain access to U.S. user data and covertly manipulate TikTok's algorithm to control the information U.S. users receive and the news they read.<sup>2</sup> Numerous members of the Biden Administration have acknowledged that TikTok poses a serious national security threat, including FBI Director Chris Wray, CIA Director Bill Burns, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, and ODNI Director Avril Haines.<sup>3</sup>

In recent months, the federal government banned TikTok from government devices, as did a majority of states, including Wisconsin earlier this month.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, several universities

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<sup>1</sup> Reuters, "China passes tough new intelligence law," <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-security-lawmaking-idUSKBN1911FW>; See CNN "Huawei says it would never hand data to China's government. Experts say it wouldn't have a choice," <https://www.cnn.com/2019/03/05/huawei-would-have-to-give-data-to-china-government-if-asked-experts.html>; Murray Scot Tanner, "Beijing's New National Intelligence Law: From Defense to Offense," *Lawfare Blog*, July 20, 2017, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/beijings-new-national-intelligence-law-defense-offense>.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Mozur, Ryan Mac, and Chang Che, "TikTok Browser Can Track Users' Keystrokes, According to New Research," *New York Times*, Aug. 21, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/19/technology/tiktok-browser-tracking.html>; Zach Dorfman, "U.S. officials say private Chinese firms have been enlisted to process stolen data for their country's spy agencies," *Foreign Policy*, Dec. 23, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/12/23/china-tech-giants-process-stolen-data-spy-agencies/>.

<sup>3</sup> Rachel Treisman, "The FBI alleges TikTok poses national security concerns," NPR, Nov. 17, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/11/17/1137155540/fbi-tiktok-national-security-concerns-china>; Judy Woodruff, "CIA Director Bill Burns on war in Ukraine, intelligence challenges posed by China," PBS NewsHour, Dec. 16, 2022, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/cia-director-bill-burns-on-war-in-ukraine-intelligence-challenges-posed-by-china>; "Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen on TikTok national security fears," CBS Evening News, Dec. 9, 2022, [https://www.cbs.com/shows/video/EP\\_yONYAdUfAfIMxP9qGwjUnXRcPqdwi/](https://www.cbs.com/shows/video/EP_yONYAdUfAfIMxP9qGwjUnXRcPqdwi/); News Article, "Fireside Chat with DNI Haines at the Reagan National Defense Forum," Office of the Director of National Intelligence, Dec. 12, 2022, <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/newsroom/news-articles/news-articles-2022/item/2346-fireside-chat-with-dni-haines-at-the-reagan-national-defense-forum>.

<sup>4</sup> David Ingram, "Biden signs TikTok ban for government devices, setting up a chaotic 2023 for the app," NBC News, Dec. 30, 2022, <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/tiktok-ban-biden-government-college-state-federal-security-privacy-rcna63724>; Brian Fung and Christopher Hickey, "TikTok access from government devices now

have banned TikTok from their networks, including the University of Texas at Austin and Auburn University.<sup>5</sup> We strongly urge the University of Wisconsin to heed the same national security warnings that led the U.S., Wisconsin, many other states, and other universities to ban TikTok from employee devices and their networks.

Given well-documented attempts by CCP-affiliated entities to influence American universities, it is especially important that we minimize the reach of TikTok on our campuses.<sup>6</sup> Please respond indicating whether you intend to ban TikTok from UW System devices and block it from UW System Wi-Fi and wired networks. If you do not intend to take these steps, please explain the reasoning for your decisions.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this vital national security matter.  
Sincerely,



Mike Gallagher  
Member of Congress



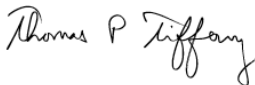
Ron Johnson  
U.S. Senator



Glenn Grothman  
Member of Congress



Bryan Steil  
Member of Congress



Tom Tiffany  
Member of Congress



Scott L. Fitzgerald  
Member of Congress



Derrick Van Orden  
Member of Congress

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restricted in more than half of US states,” CNN, Jan. 16, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2023/01/16/tech/tiktok-state-restrictions/index.html>; Press Release, “Gov. Evers Signs Executive Order Banning TikTok, Other Technologies from State-Issued Devices,” Jan. 12, 2023, <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/WIGOV/bulletins/34275eb>.

<sup>5</sup> Kate McGee, “Texas universities block access to TikTok on campus Wi-Fi networks,” *The Texas Tribune*, Jan. 17, 2023, <https://www.texastribune.org/2023/01/17/ut-austin-tiktok-ban/>; Sapna Maheshwari, “Auburn Banned TikTok, and Students Can’t Stop Talking About It,” *The New York Times*, Jan. 15, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/15/business/auburn-tiktok-ban-students.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Seth D. Kaplan and John Metz, “Concealed Crackdown: China’s Influence Across Campus,” *Heterodox Academy*, Oct. 4, 2022, <https://heterodoxacademy.org/blog/concealed-crackdown-chinas-influence-across-campus/>.