

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 24, 2024

Mr. Daniel York  
President and CEO  
Cox Media Group  
6205 Peachtree Dunwoody Rd  
Atlanta, GA 30328

Dear Mr. York,

I write today with concerns following recent reporting by the *New York Post* that Cox Media Group has admitted to investors that it deploys “active listening” software, which uses artificial intelligence to “capture real-time intent data by listening to [users] phone conversations.”<sup>1</sup>

The reporting alleges that during a slide deck presentation to investors, Cox Media Group claimed the company targets adverts based on phone conversations of potential customers. According to the article, Cox Media Group identified specific clients during the presentation, including Meta and Google.<sup>2</sup>

I am deeply concerned about how the private and sensitive information is used by companies like Cox Media Group. The *New York Post* reporting claims Cox Media wrote in the pitch deck that “advertisers can pair this voice-data with behavioral data to target in-market consumers.”<sup>3</sup>

Consumers have long expressed concerns about their privacy in the virtual space and how their data is misused. If this reporting is true, it confirms longstanding suspicions by many consumers that technology and media companies are violating their privacy for profit by marketing products that closely reflect key words or phrases from private conversations. It is imperative that consumers have the ability to clearly opt in and out of features that track their behavior and that they are alerted when these features are deployed. I request a copy of the slide deck presented to investors and a response to the following questions by October 8, 2024:

1. As a part of your services, do you deploy software that listens to and/or collects data from the phone conversations of users?
  - a. If so, do you notify consumers of this feature? How do you do so?
  - b. If so, can consumers opt in or out of this feature?
  - c. If so, how many of your clients do you provide with this type of software?

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<sup>1</sup> Ariel Zibler, *Marketing firm admits using your own phone to listen in on your conversations*, *New York Post* (Sept. 6, 2024) <https://nypost.com/2024/09/03/business/marketing-firm-spies-on-you-through-your-phones-microphone-report/>.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Cox, *Here's the Pitch Deck for 'Active Listening' Ad Targeting*, *404 Media* (September 6, 2024) <https://www.404media.co/heres-the-pitch-deck-for-active-listening-ad-targeting/>.

<sup>3</sup> Ariel Zibler, *Marketing firm admits using your own phone to listen in on your conversations*, *New York Post* (Sept. 6, 2024) <https://nypost.com/2024/09/03/business/marketing-firm-spies-on-you-through-your-phones-microphone-report/>.

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2. Have any of your clients asked to deploy the “active listening” features on their platforms or services referenced in the *New York Post* article?
  - a. If so, what is the process of you deploying and maintaining this service?
  - b. If so, do you notify consumers of this feature? How do you do so?
  - c. If so, can consumers opt in or out of this feature?
3. Please provide a comprehensive list of companies to whom you have provided the types of software listed in questions #1 and #2.
4. Please provide copies of all agreements and policies you have with these companies for the deployment of active listening features.
5. Has Cox Media Group taken any steps to obscure this feature from clients or consumers?

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



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Marsha Blackburn  
United States Senator