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November 15, 2023

Tim Cook
CEO
Apple, Inc.
One Apple Park Way
Cupertino, CA 95014

Dear Mr. Cook:

We write to inquire about recent reports that Apple TV+, the streaming service operated by Apple, will no longer produce *The Problem With Jon Stewart* in light of creative differences with its host, including differences regarding potential content regarding the People’s Republic of China (PRC). According to these reports, “Mr. Stewart told members of his staff . . . that potential show topics related to China and artificial intelligence were causing concern among Apple executives.”¹ According to the *Hollywood Reporter*, “Apple approached Stewart and informed the host that both sides needed to be ‘aligned’ regarding topics on the show. Stewart, sources say, balked at the idea of being ‘hamstrung’ by Apple, which threatened to cancel the series. Stewart, sources say, wanted to have full creative control of the series and, after Apple threatened to cancel the series, told the tech company that he was walking away from the show rather than have his hands tied.”² If these reports are accurate, it potentially speaks to broader concerns about indirect Chinese Communist Party (CCP) influence over the creative expression of American artists and companies on CCP-related topics. It also highlights an additional reason, beyond the traditionally-cited national security rationales, why we encourage Apple to accelerate its efforts to reduce its dependence on the PRC in its core business.

The strategic competition between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party is not just about military, economic, or even technological power; it’s also about values. And few values distinguish our system from the CCP more sharply than the responsible and open exchange of ideas through creative expression, without the improper interference of foreign powers. We know from previous incidents involving production companies other than Apple that fear of the CCP, the CCP’s documented history of retaliating against companies, and the lure of the PRC market and PRC-based financing have significantly chilled the creation of American content that could be perceived as critical of the CCP. While companies have the right to determine what content is appropriate for their streaming service, the coercive tactics of a foreign power should not be directly or indirectly influencing these determinations.

¹ Benjamin Mullin, John Koblin & Tripp Mickle, *Jon Stewart’s Show on Apple is Ending*, THE N.Y. TIMES (Oct. 19, 2023) available at www.nytimes.com/2023/10/19/business/media/jon-stewart-the-problem-ends.html.

² Lesley Goldberg, *Jon Stewart’s ‘The Problem’ Not Moving Forward at Apple Amid Creative Differences*, THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER (Oct. 19, 2023) available at www.hollywoodreporter.com/tv/tv-news/jon-stewart-the-problem-canceled-apple-creative-differences-1235623235/.

Although we recognize the difficult situation companies may find themselves in, potential decisions to not renew shows, or not produce a film or show in the first place, due to anticipated CCP objections to particular content deny U.S. viewers and global audiences access to important information about the PRC that reflects a broader variety of perspectives. This means that the CCP's coercive behavior harms creative workers who are unable to speak their minds through content without grave professional consequences, production companies and distribution channels that take a chance on controversial CCP-related content and often are retaliated against, as well as audiences who are potentially unable to view content that speaks to an important geopolitical challenge of our time.

If Jon Stewart can potentially be impeded from offering commentary on the CCP, what does this mean for less prominent personalities? While there is a chance that a high-profile individual like Jon Stewart can locate another streaming service where he can express his views on PRC-related matters, an aspiring comedian who wants to use satire to make broader points about human rights and authoritarianism faces even bleaker prospects. Respectfully, we believe that this needs to change and responsible creative professionals should be able to freely write and perform on PRC-related topics.

The CCP has a long track record of retaliating against companies that fail to walk the Party's line, and we understand the importance of the PRC as a market and manufacturing hub for Apple, a company that has made significant contributions to American innovation and technological leadership. It is imperative that we not only highlight incidents such as this that may raise concerns over the impacts of the CCP's coercive tactics on U.S. companies but also urgently work to diversify supply chains and reduce overall technological dependencies on the PRC that provide the CCP with such significant economic leverage. In the case of Apple, as evidenced by your recent trip to Beijing, it appears maintaining a positive relationship with the CCP may be a priority given ongoing supply chain and financial dependencies.

Accordingly, we request that representatives of Apple offer Select Committee staff a briefing regarding these concerns by December 15, 2023, so that we can better understand the facts giving rise to the recent news reports, as well as related matters regarding Apple, the PRC, and its supply chains. We also anticipate speaking with representatives of Mr. Stewart. To reassure the creative community in light of these reports, we also respectfully request that Apple publicly commit that content that could be perceived as critical of the CCP or the PRC is welcome on Apple TV+ and other Apple services.

We support the ability of artists, writers, studios, and streaming services alike to create content without fear of potential CCP retaliation and punishment. We similarly encourage American technology companies to diversify their supply chains, reduce their potential susceptibility to CCP pressure, and decrease their overall dependence on the PRC.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Mike Gallagher
Chairman



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Ranking Member