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March 19, 2018

Mark Zuckerberg
Chief Executive Officer
Facebook
1 Hacker Way
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Dear Mr. Zuckerberg:

I write to learn how Facebook user data may have been inappropriately obtained and abused by third parties to target and manipulate tens of millions of American voters without the knowledge or consent of those individuals.

According to media reports and an official Facebook statement, approximately 270,000 Facebook users downloaded an app created by University of Cambridge researcher Dr. Aleksandr Spectre purporting to offer personality predictions for users and describing itself on Facebook as “a research app used by psychologists.” In addition to downloading Facebook data about app users, the app also sought and collected data about the Facebook friends of its users. Though Facebook offered an obscure privacy setting to disable that type of access, the setting was not advertised, nor was it enabled by default. As a result, the vast majority of the tens of millions of users whose data was collected by Spectre likely had no knowledge that their information was being harvested by third parties; therefore they were unable to knowingly consent to the collection of their data.

Spectre’s stockpiling of user data relied upon a Facebook- developed and marketed Application Programming Interface (API) that enabled third-party app developers to collect data not only from app users, but also from those users’ Facebook friends. This official Facebook developer tool allowed Spectre to download detailed information about 50 million Facebook users, a feat he later touted in a public presentation, claiming that his research lab had Facebook data on “50+ million individuals for whom we have the capacity to predict virtually any trait.” Likewise, reporting indicates that his business partner boasted on LinkedIn that their company owned “a massive data pool of 40+ million individuals across the United States—for each of whom we have generated detailed characteristic and trait profiles.”

According to recent media reports, Spectre provided his data to Cambridge Analytica, a data-driven political consulting firm. Cambridge Analytica then used Spectre’s data to build detailed “psychographic profiles” of Americans and target those users with personalized political advertisements. As Christopher Wylie, a former Cambridge Analytica employee, told the *Observer*: Cambridge Analytica “exploited Facebook to harvest millions of people’s profiles. And built models to exploit what we knew about them and target their inner demons. That was the basis the entire company was built on.”

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Facebook has now revealed that as early as 2015, it knew that Spectre provided Facebook user data to Strategic Communication Laboratories/Cambridge Analytica. After learning of this, Facebook apparently removed Spectre's app and demanded certifications from Spectre and Cambridge Analytica that the information had been destroyed. However, it took Facebook until this past week to prevent Spectre or Cambridge Analytica from using its platform in any meaningful way. Your firm finally took this common-sense step, presumably, after being contacted by the *New York Times* and *Observer*, which were preparing a major exposé of these practices.

The troubling reporting on the ease with which Cambridge Analytica was able to exploit Facebook's default privacy settings for profit and political gain throws into question not only the prudence and desirability of Facebook's business practices and the dangers of monetizing consumers' private information, but also raises serious concerns about the role Facebook played in facilitating and permitting the covert collection and misuse of consumer information. With little oversight—and no meaningful intervention from Facebook—Cambridge Analytica was able to use Facebook-developed and marketed tools to weaponize detailed psychological profiles against tens of millions of Americans.

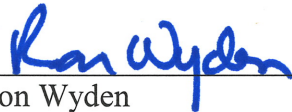
With this in mind, I ask that you provide further information on Facebook's role in this incident and the overall awareness your company maintains into third-party collection and use of Facebook user data. Please provide me with complete answers to the following questions by April 13, 2018.

1. How many incidents during the past ten years is Facebook aware of in which third parties collected or processed user data in violation of Facebook's Platform Policies? Please describe each incident, the number of users whose information was collected and misused, and what steps Facebook took to remedy the violation.
2. With regard to the data downloaded by Spectre and his company, has Facebook made any attempt to identify the 50 million users impacted and inform those users that their information was collected and misused? If not, why not?
3. Has Facebook ever notified individual Facebook users about inappropriate collection, retention, or subsequent use of their data by third parties? If not, why not?
4. According to Facebook's Platform Policy, the company reserves the right to audit apps in order to ensure they are "safe" and do not violate the company's terms of service. In each of the past ten years, how many apps has Facebook audited? Please describe the scope and findings of each audit.
5. Facebook has now suspended Strategic Communication Laboratories/Cambridge Analytica from its platform. However, Facebook has apparently known since 2015 that Cambridge Analytica had obtained and used data that had been obtained from Facebook in violation of your company's policies. Why did you not suspend the company from your platform in 2015?
6. Is Facebook aware of any instances in which Cambridge Analytica or its clients utilized the Facebook user data obtained by Spectre and his company to deliver targeted advertisements to Facebook users? For example, has this data been used to create and target Facebook Custom Audiences?

- a. If Facebook is not aware of any instances, has your company examined historical advertising data to look for such patterns? If not, why not?
7. In 2011, Facebook entered into a consent agreement with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). Under the terms of that agreement, Facebook is required to maintain “a comprehensive privacy program that is reasonably designed to (1) address privacy risks related to the development and management of new and existing products and services for consumers, and (2) protect the privacy and confidentiality of covered information.”
 - a. Please describe how, three years after Facebook entered into the consent order with the FTC, Spectre and his company were able to download sufficiently detailed data on 50 million Facebook users without their affirmative knowledge or consent.
8. The 2011 consent agreement also requires Facebook to obtain biennial privacy assessments and reports from an independent third-party professional with experience in the field of privacy and data protection. Facebook is required to provide the initial report to the FTC, to retain each subsequent report, and to provide a copy of them to the FTC, if requested.
 - a. To date, has the FTC requested any of the assessments or reports? If so, which assessments or reports were requested by the FTC and when were they requested?
 - b. Please provide me with a copy of every privacy assessment and report prepared by or for Facebook as required by the 2011 consent agreement.

If you have any questions about this request, please contact Chris Soghoian on my staff.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator