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United States Senate
COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
AND TRANSPORTATION
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125
WEBSITE: <https://commerce.senate.gov>

September 19, 2025

Senator Ted Cruz
Chairman
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Cruz:

We formally request that you call Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Brendan Carr to testify at an oversight hearing before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. On Wednesday, Chairman Carr threatened to use the regulatory power of the FCC against ABC, its parent company Disney, and its network affiliates if ABC did not fire comedian Jimmy Kimmel for his comments about the assassination of Charlie Kirk. As the Committee with jurisdiction over the FCC, it is our constitutional duty to conduct oversight over this matter and demand Chairman Carr answer for this unprecedented attack on the First Amendment.

In a recent appearance on a podcast, Chairman Carr threatened to wield the power of the Commission against ABC and its network affiliates, saying: “we can do this the easy way or the hard way” and “this is a very, very serious issue for Disney.” Chairman Carr then specifically spoke to affiliates of ABC—which hold FCC licenses—telling them, “frankly . . . it’s past time that a lot of these licensed broadcasters themselves push back. . . . It’s time for them to step up[.]”¹ Chairman Carr’s words had an immediate effect—within hours, Nexstar and Sinclair, the largest affiliate groups in the country, said they would preempt Kimmel’s show, and ABC indefinitely suspended the program.² Chairman Carr then celebrated the decisions by Nexstar and Sinclair to preempt Kimmel’s show as “the right thing” and “responsive.”³

These bullying tactics are offensive to the First Amendment. As you know, the First Amendment prohibits government retaliation against individuals or groups for expressing their views. You accurately described Chairman Carr’s comments as “right out of *Goodfellas*.”

¹ Benny Johnson, X, <https://x.com/bennyjohnson/status/1968466749348565438>.

² Brian Stetler, CNN, How Brendan Carr, the attack-dog FCC chair, helped take down Jimmy Kimmel with words, not actions (Sept. 18, 2025), <https://www.cnn.com/2025/09/18/media/brendan-carr-jimmy-kimmel-fcc-first-amendment>.

³ Brendan Carr, X, <https://x.com/BrendanCarrFCC/status/1968517933073617248>; <https://x.com/BrendanCarrFCC/status/1968449919221416427>.

That's right out of a mafioso coming into a bar, going 'Nice bar you have here. It'd be a shame if something happened to it.'"⁴ As the Supreme Court unanimously reaffirmed last year, "Government officials cannot attempt to coerce private parties in order to punish or suppress views that the government disfavors."⁵

You have long prioritized conducting oversight to ensure our government is not being used to weaponize the censorship of speech. At a time when free speech is under threat, this hearing could not be more important for the American people. We look forward to working with you on this hearing with Chairman Carr and upholding our duty to conduct robust oversight over the FCC.

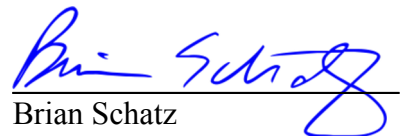
Sincerely,



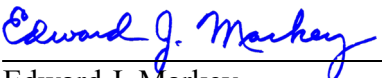
Maria Cantwell
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee
on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation



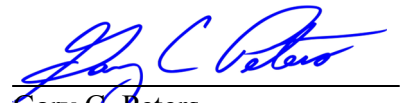
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



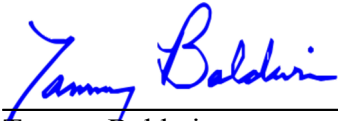
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



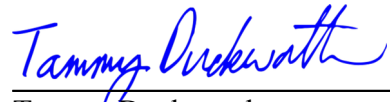
Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

⁴ Joseph Morton, Ted Cruz says FCC chair sounded like a mafia boss in threats against ABC over Jimmy Kimmel, Dallas Morning News, Sept. 19, 2025.

⁵ National Rifle Association v. Vullo, slip op. at 1, 602 U.S. __ (2024).



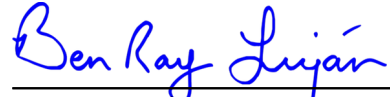
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
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