

United States Senate

July 18, 2025

Shari Redstone
Chair
Paramount Global
1515 Broadway
New York, NY 10036

Dear Ms. Redstone,

Last night, Stephen Colbert announced that CBS will end “The Late Show with Stephen Colbert” next spring. Although CBS, a Paramount subsidiary, has cited financial reasons — including a projected \$40 million loss for the show this year — for this decision, the timing has raised public questions. Just days earlier, Colbert sharply criticized Paramount’s \$16 million settlement of a lawsuit brought by President Donald Trump — a settlement many view as an attempt to facilitate government approval of the company’s proposed merger with Skydance Global. Given the importance of protecting editorial independence from political influence, and the public interest stakes in the pending merger, I am seeking additional information to understand the full context surrounding this programming decision.

As part of his monologue on Monday night, Colbert criticized Paramount for its \$16 million settlement with Trump. In his baseless lawsuit, Trump falsely alleged that CBS violated the law through its editorial decisions around a *60 Minutes* interview with then-Vice President Kamala Harris. Although the interview transcript clearly demonstrated that Trump’s claims were false and intended to intimidate the news media,¹ Paramount nevertheless agreed to settle for \$16 million² — a settlement that has cast a shadow over the Federal Communication Commission’s (FCC) ongoing review of the Paramount-Skydance merger. In response, Colbert said Monday, “I believe this kind of complicated financial settlement with a sitting government official has a technical name in legal circles: It’s big fat bribe.”³

If Paramount is unhappy with Colbert’s monologue — including its political tone or position — the company has every right to respond with personnel and other operational

¹ See, e.g., Joe Lancaster, *Transcript Proves the 60 Minutes Scandal Was Always Fake*, Reason Magazine (Feb. 6, 2025), <https://reason.com/2025/02/06/transcript-proves-the-60-minutes-scandal-was-always-fake/>; Brian Stelter, *The FCC just published CBS’ raw Kamala Harris ‘60 Minutes’ interview*, CNN (Feb. 5, 2025), <https://www.cnn.com/2025/02/05/media/cbs-kamala-harris-60-minutes-interview/index.html>.

² See, e.g., Benjamin Mullin et al., *Paramount to Pay Trump \$16 Million to Settle ‘60 Minutes’ Lawsuit*, N.Y. Times (July 2, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/02/business/media/paramount-trump-60-minutes-lawsuit.html>.

³ See, e.g., Ted Johnson, *Stephen Colbert Riffs On Paramount’s ‘Big Fat Bribe’ To Settle Donald Trump’s CBS ‘60 Minutes’ Lawsuit*, Deadline (July 14, 2025), <https://deadline.com/2025/07/stephen-colbert-trump-60-minutes-settlement-paramount-1236457376/>.

decisions. And it, of course, has every right to make programming decisions for financial reasons. But Paramount should not be making editorial decisions or compromising its editorial independence at the behest of or under pressure from the government, including in the context of securing FCC merger approval. If the Trump administration is using its regulatory authority to influence or otherwise pressure your company's editorial decisions, the public deserves to know.

To better understand the circumstances around the cancellation of "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert," I request answers to the following questions in writing by July 25, 2025.

1. Has any official in the Trump administration, including the President or an official at the FCC, contacted your company about Colbert's monologue on Monday night?
2. If so, did they request Paramount or CBS take any action in response to Colbert's monologue, including the cancellation of "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert"? If so, please identify those conversations and the requested actions.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator