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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6200

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December 17, 2020

The Honorable Charles P. Rettig
Commissioner
Internal Revenue Service
1111 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20224

Dear Commissioner Rettig,

We write to express our deep concern about recent reports that several federal government agencies have been compromised by sophisticated hackers. According to these reports, this hacking operation is historic in scope, and has seemingly affected not only the Treasury Department, of which the Internal Revenue Service is the largest bureau, but the Commerce Department, State Department, Department of Homeland Security, National Institutes of Health, and parts of the Pentagon.

On Sunday, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) issued Emergency Directive 21-01. According to CISA, SolarWinds Orion products are currently being exploited by malicious actors, presenting a “high potential for compromise of agency information systems,” and a successful compromise would have a “grave impact” on federal networks. Agencies have been instructed by CISA to immediately power down SolarWinds Orion products and then hunt for signs of further compromise

The IRS appears to have been a customer of SolarWinds as recently as 2017.¹ Given the extreme sensitivity of personal taxpayer information entrusted to the IRS, and the harm both to Americans’ privacy and our national security that could result from the theft and exploitation of this data by our adversaries, it is imperative that we understand the extent to which the IRS may have been compromised. It is also critical that we understand what actions the IRS is taking to mitigate any potential damage, ensure that hackers do not still have access to internal IRS systems, and prevent future hacks of taxpayer data.

¹ <https://www.techvalidate.com/product-research/solarwinds-government/case-studies/594-552-524>

We request an immediate briefing on the IRS' efforts to discover whether its systems were breached, and if they were, whether sensitive taxpayer information was stolen. Please contact our staff at 202-224-4515 as soon as possible to arrange this meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chuck Grassley". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Charles E. Grassley
Chairman
Senate Finance Committee

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ron Wyden". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
Senate Finance Committee