The Honorable Michael C. Stenger  
Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Philip G. Kiko  
Chief Administrative Officer  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Stenger and Mr. Kiko:

We write to ask that you take immediate action to secure telephone calls between the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives from foreign government surveillance.

Highly-sophisticated foreign intelligence services have long targeted U.S. government communications in Washington, D.C. The top counter-intelligence official in the U.S. government, William Evanina, advised the Senate Intelligence Committee at a May 2018 hearing of his recommendation that officials encrypt their unclassified telephone conversations. However, the Senate’s internal telephone calls remained unencrypted until August 2018, leaving calls vulnerable to interception by any hacker or foreign government that gained access to the Senate’s internal network. The Senate has since enabled the phone encryption feature built into the Senate’s desk phones. Internal House telephone calls made using the more recent models of House desk phones are also encrypted.

Encryption of intra-chamber phone calls is important, but it does not fully address the surveillance threat. Calls between the Senate and House are still vulnerable to spying by anyone who gains access to the data connection between the two Chambers.

The Pentagon has recognized the threat of unencrypted communications and taken steps to secure its communications. In February 2019, the Defense Information Systems Agency advised that it “secure[s] its core network by using a wide range of technologies that are available on the market, to include bulk encryption [of data].” DISA also stated that it recommends that “Federal, State and Local agencies should work towards protecting their unclassified networks by applying encryption technologies similar to the Department of Defense.”

Congress must secure itself from the serious threat posed by foreign spies. Please take immediate action to encrypt, in bulk, all internal calls and other electronic communications between the Senate, House and other components of the legislative branch. Please also provide us, by June
12, 2020, with a written plan detailing when you expect to have completed this critical cybersecurity upgrade.

Thank you for your attention to this serious matter.

Sincerely,

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator

Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

Ben Sasse
United States Senator

/s/
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

James Lankford
United States Senator

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

John Cornyn
United States Senator

Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

Jerry Moran
United States Senator
Brian Schatz  
United States Senator

Kevin Cramer  
United States Senator

Anna G. Eshoo  
Member of Congress

Mike Gallagher  
Member of Congress

Raja Krishnamoorthi  
Member of Congress

Michael Waltz  
Member of Congress

C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger  
Member of Congress

Michael T. McCaul  
Member of Congress

Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress

Will Hurd  
Member of Congress