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November 17, 2026

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

Dear Chairman Cruz:

I am writing to request that you remove the nomination of Danielle Thumann Severs, a Republican, to the Federal Communications Commission from the agenda of the Committee's Executive Session on Wednesday, November 18, 2026. It appears that Ms. Thumann misled the Committee and offered false testimony, seriously calling into question her judgment and character and impeding the Committee's work in determining whether she should be seated on the Commission. While Ms. Thumann testified she did not work "on any media-related issues," documents obtained through Freedom of Information Act requests demonstrate that she worked on several media related issues, including on commitments that Skydance made to pave the way for FCC approval of its merger with Paramount. The responses to Questions for the Record that Ms. Thumann submitted to this Committee also seemingly contradict her testimony at the hearing and other evidence contained in the records. In light of this troubling information, I further request that this Committee hold another hearing on Ms. Thumann's nomination before taking any further action to allow Ms. Thumann to correct the record and provide members with an opportunity to obtain full and accurate testimony.

At Ms. Thumann's November 10, 2026, confirmation hearing, many members, including you, engaged with Ms. Thumann about the Commission's recent investigations into numerous broadcasters. Indeed, the Commission's media work was one of the most discussed topics of the hearing. I asked her directly about her role in advising Chairman Carr based on her title as Senior Counsel to the Chairman. She responded, "I have advised the Chairman on issues before three of the bureaus, I have not worked with the Chairman on any media-related issues." Public documents, obtained through Freedom of Information Act requests, clearly and directly contradict her statement.

The documents show that, not only was Ms. Thumann looped in on numerous media issues but, at the direction of the Chairman, she helped draft Skydance's commitments that facilitated the

FCC's approval of the Skydance-Paramount merger. The records show that on July 15, 2025, the same day that David Ellison, Skydance's Chief Executive Officer, met with Chairman Carr and other advisors,[1] Ms. Thumann was asked, at the Chairman's request, to review the draft of a letter that Skydance intended to submit in the Skydance-Paramount proceeding. Ms. Thumann replied with a redlined version of the letter that same evening. It appears that this letter was later submitted in the Skydance-Paramount record, MB Docket No. 24-275, on July 22, 2025, by Skydance as part of the "pending applications seeking approval for the transfer and control of Paramount Global" to "confirm the elimination of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives that were in place at Paramount."[2] The merger was approved two days later, on July 24, 2025.

To be clear, the draft letter that Ms. Thumann reviewed, and apparently partially redlined, was not a letter that the Commission intended to send to Skydance or Paramount. It was a letter that Skydance later submitted to the Commission as its own work, a commitment that helped persuade the Commission that the merger was in the public interest, and that was cited in the Commission's ultimate order approving the transaction. This means that the Chairman's office was editing a regulated company's commitments behind closed doors and then presenting them to the public as company's own pledges. Not only does Ms. Thumann's involvement in redlining this document definitively show her working with the Chairman on a media-related issue, which she denied during her hearing, but it raises significant questions about the Commission's process in approving the Paramount-Skydance merger, and whether it was fair, impartial, and transparent as required by law.

The documents before us raise serious ethical and First Amendment questions about whether Ms. Thumann or Chairman Carr forced Skydance into using Ms. Thumann's words to frame their own commitments and constitutes a misuse of her position at the Commission. This action also seems to contradict her response to you in support of your JAWBONE Act when she agreed that it is "incredibly important that federal officials not use their position to coerce against protected speech." Regardless of where you stand on the Skydance-Paramount transaction, I would hope that we can both agree that it is beyond inappropriate for anybody in the government to force a private company to be used as a sock puppet to regurgitate the administration's ideology, particularly while holding a desired regulatory outcome over its head.

And that was not the only media issue that Ms. Thumann worked on. She also played a role in processing informal complaints related to CBS 60 Minutes alleged news distortion and she apparently orchestrated the Commission's response to consumers regarding the Jimmy Kimmel controversy. These matters have only come to light because outside groups used the Freedom of Information Act to receive a fraction of the agency's records. Simply, Ms. Thumann's testimony cannot be squared with the Commission's own records and her resistance to discussing these issues during her hearing impaired the Committee's ability to fully consider her nomination.

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[1] *See* Letter from Matthew A. Brill, Counsel to Skydance Media, LLC, Latham & Watkins, KKP, to Marlene H. Dortch, MB Docket No. 24-275 (filed July 17, 2025) (notice of July 15, 2025, meeting with Chairman Brendan Carr), https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/1071757519667/1.

[2] Letter from Stephanie Kyoko McKinnon, General Counsel, Skydance Media, LCC to Brendan Carr, Chairman, FCC, MB Docket No. 24-275 (filed July 22, 2025) (Skydance DEI Letter to FCC) https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/1072299913934/1.

While I find it hard to believe that Ms. Thumann simply misspoke or misunderstood the question, I hope that her inability to answer was not indicative of willful deception. Either way, if her testimony departed this far from the record on what we can see, the Committee has every reason to ask her what else she has hidden. Before moving forward with her nomination, this Committee must conduct another hearing to fully explore this new information and allow Ms. Thumann to correct the record. We must only proceed once we have all the information necessary to carry out our Constitutional duties.

Thank you for your attention to this pressing matter as the Committee considers this nomination.

Sincerely,



Ben Ray Luján
United States Senator