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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

May 5, 2022

Rochelle P. Walensky, M.D., MPH
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Dear Director Walensky:

A recent report revealed that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) spent at least \$420,000 to purchase location data from “at least 20 million active cellphone users per day” in an effort to assist the agency in monitoring Americans during the pandemic.¹ According to that report, the CDC obtained location data from at least one company, SafeGraph, to examine activities in schools, places of worship, parks, grocery stores, and public transit stations, among others.² CDC reportedly wrote in a document, “the mobility data obtained in this contract will be available for CDC agency-wide use and will support numerous CDC priorities.”³

It remains unclear why the CDC tracked millions of Americans during the pandemic and whether it continues to do so. In response to COVID-19, the CDC should have been prioritizing the development of treatments, effective testing, and vaccine safety rather than tracking Americans’ daily lives.

To better understand the CDC’s purchase and use of location data, I request your agency provide the following information no later than May 19, 2022:

1. Was CDC’s use of location data the only mechanism it employed to monitor Americans during the pandemic?
2. Who at CDC approved the use and subsequent purchase of location data?
3. What companies supply CDC with location data? For each company indicate the year(s) in which the data was provided to CDC and the cost of that data.

¹ Joseph Cox, *CDC Tracked Millions of Phones to See If Americans Followed COVID Lockdown Orders*, VICE, May 3, 2022, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/m7vymn/cdc-tracked-phones-location-data-curfews>.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

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4. Provide all records referring or relating to location data provide by SafeGraph or other companies.
5. Provide all CDC studies or reports that relied on the location data CDC received from companies including but not limited to SafeGraph.
6. Did CDC share location data with other federal, state, and local agencies? If so, provide what entities received the data and explain why.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Ron Johnson
Ranking Member
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations

cc: The Honorable Jon Ossoff
Chairman
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations

The Honorable Christi A. Grimm
Inspector General
Department of Health and Human Services