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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

WEBSITE: <http://commerce.senate.gov>

March 23, 2017

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, Northwest
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Ross:

Congratulations on your confirmation as the Nation's 39th Secretary of Commerce. As you evaluate the Department's priorities, we believe it is imperative for you to prioritize the security of its information systems. Pursuant to the Federal Information Security Modernization Act (Pub. L. 113-283), the head of each federal agency is responsible for the security of that agency's information and systems. In addition, the Commission on Enhancing National Cybersecurity's December 2016 report recommended that agencies implement the Framework for Improving Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity developed by the National Institute of Standards and Technology. The Committee has strongly supported the public-private partnership process employed in developing this framework and included the process in the Cybersecurity Enhancement Act of 2014 (Pub. L. 113-274). Ensuring the availability, integrity, and confidentiality of the Department's systems, such as those used for satellites or proprietary business information, is critical to the competitiveness of our nation.

Last month, the Committee held a hearing entitled, "A Look Ahead: Inspector General Recommendations for Improving Federal Agencies." At the hearing, Department of Commerce Inspector General Peggy E. Gustafson testified that cybersecurity remains a significant challenge despite efforts to improve. Recent Office of Inspector General reports have repeatedly found weaknesses in information security practices, most recently with national security systems. More broadly, the Government Accountability Office has made approximately 2,500 recommendations to improve information security programs across the federal government over the past several years. Departments and agencies have yet to implement many of these recommendations.

We ask that you commit to making the cybersecurity of the Department's systems a top priority and that you keep the Committee informed as you plan to implement this effort. Thank you for your cooperation with this important matter.

Sincerely,



JOHN THUNE
Chairman



CORY GARDNER
U.S. Senator

cc: The Honorable Bill Nelson, Ranking Member