

JOSH HAWLEY  
MISSOURI

KYLE PLOTKIN  
CHIEF OF STAFF

212 RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING  
TELEPHONE: (202) 224-6154  
FAX: (202) 228-0526  
WWW.HAWLEY.SENATE.GOV

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2509

COMMITTEES  
JUDICIARY  
ARMED SERVICES  
HOMELAND SECURITY  
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
SMALL BUSINESS  
AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
AGING

June 18, 2019

Mr. Sundar Pichai  
Chief Executive Officer  
Google, LLC  
1600 Amphitheatre Pkwy  
Mountain View, California 94043

Dear Mr. Pichai,

I write to express concern regarding Google's role in the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong. On June 14, 2019, the Agence France-Presse (AFP) reported that Google Translate mistranslated the phrase, "I am sad to see Hong Kong become part of China," to, "I am *happy* to see Hong Kong become part of China [italics added]," for a period of approximately one hour during the protests. The resulting mistranslation aligned with the narrative advanced by the Government of the People's Republic of China concerning the protests.

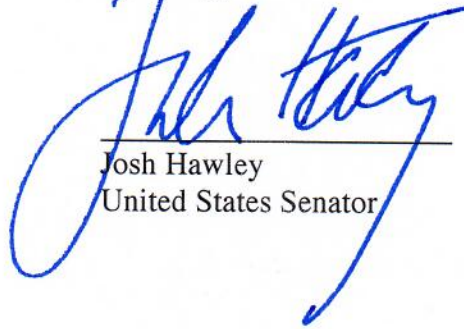
Responding to the AFP report, a Google spokesman said, "Google Translate is an automatic translator, using patterns from millions of existing translations to help decide on the best translation for you... These automatic systems can sometimes make unintentional mistakes like translating a negative to a positive." Yet, given Google's close relationship with Beijing and financial incentive to remain close to that authoritarian government, I remain concerned that Google may have been negligent in performing the due diligence that could have averted this mistranslation at a juncture where precision of message is so critical.

That due diligence is particularly necessary in the case of Hong Kong, as the Government of the People's Republic of China is intent on reasserting control over the city and has long used information operations to advance its political agenda. Inasmuch as Google provides a space for the people of Hong Kong to share information, that space will be targeted for manipulation by Beijing. It thus falls upon Google to place principle over profit and protect its products against such interference – even if doing so might cause discomfort in the company's dealings with Beijing.

The people of Hong Kong are fighting now to preserve the democratic character of their city. Millions of those people are relying on Google's products to advance this noble cause. As a company whose success stems in part from the liberties inherent to

American society, Google ought to take this cause as seriously as those using its platforms to fight for their freedom.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Josh Hawley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large loop on the left side and a long tail on the right side. A horizontal line is drawn across the middle of the signature, positioned above the printed name and title.

Josh Hawley  
United States Senator