

ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927
Minority (202) 225-3641

November 18, 2019

Joseph R. Impicciche
President and Chief Executive Officer
Ascension
101 South Hanley Rd., Suite 450
St. Louis, MO 63105

Dear Mr. Impicciche:

We write regarding a disturbing initiative through which Ascension, the second largest health care system in the United States, has reportedly shared the health information of tens of millions of its patients with Google.¹ According to news reports, this initiative, called “Project Nightingale,” will collect and consolidate patient health data for various purposes, including to develop artificial intelligence tools.²

While we appreciate your efforts to provide the public with further information about Project Nightingale, this initiative raises serious privacy concerns. For example, longstanding questions related to Google’s commitment to protecting the privacy of its own users’ data raise serious concerns about whether Google can be a good steward of patients’ personal health information.³ Additionally, despite the sensitivity of the information collected through Project Nightingale, reports indicate that employees across Google, including at its parent company Alphabet, have access to, and the ability to download, the personal health information of Ascension’s patients.⁴ Concerns have also been justifiably raised about Ascension’s decision not to notify its patients that their information would be shared with Google or how their information would be used.

¹ *Google’s ‘Project Nightingale’ Gathers Personal Health Data of Millions of Americans*, Wall Street Journal (Nov. 11, 2019).

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*; *Google’s Secret Cache of Medical Data Includes Names and Full Details of Millions – Whistleblower*, The Guardian (Nov. 12, 2019).

Mr. Joseph R. Impicciche

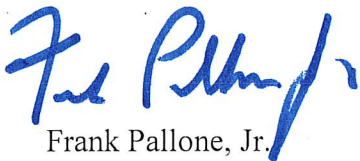
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We therefore request a briefing by December 6, 2019, on, among other items, what data Ascension is sharing with Google as part of Project Nightingale, how such data is being used (including any use in the development of artificial intelligence tools) and shared, the extent to which employees at Google and its parent company Alphabet have access to this information, the extent to which patients were informed about the use and sharing of their data, and what steps are being taken to protect the privacy and security of patients' data.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation. If you have any questions, and to arrange the briefing, please contact Manmeet Dhindsa with the Committee staff at (202) 225-2927.

Sincerely,



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman



Anna G. Eshoo
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Health



Diana DeGette
Chair
Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations



Jan Schakowsky
Chair
Subcommittee on Consumer
Protection and Commerce