

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 22, 2023

Sundar Pichai
Chief Executive Officer
Google LLC
1600 Amphitheatre Parkway
Mountain View, CA 94043

Dear Mr. Pichai,

We write to express our concern that Google is not upholding its commitment to delete sensitive location data, particularly when it can reveal private health care decisions. This data is extremely personal and includes information about reproductive health care. We are also concerned that it can be used to target advertisements for services that may be unnecessary or potentially harmful physically, psychologically, or emotionally.

Last July, Google rightly noted that location data can be very personal, and announced that it would delete entries of sensitive locations from the Location History feature “in the coming weeks.” The locations included in the announcement included counseling centers, domestic violence shelters, abortion clinics, fertility centers, and addiction treatment facilities.¹

Now, over 10 months after this announcement, reporters for the Washington Post visited hospitals, fertility clinics, and Planned Parenthood clinics in multiple states and found instances where Google stored the exact name and address of the location visited (e.g. “Planned Parenthood – San Francisco Health Center”). In other cases, the location was shown as a nearby establishment or the general neighborhood, and sometimes the data was indeed deleted within 24 hours.² Another report found that Google failed to delete sensitive location data in nearly 60 percent of test cases over the last several months.³ Claiming and publicly announcing that Google will delete sensitive location data, without consistently doing so, could be considered a deceptive practice.

We ask that you respond to the questions below by May 26, 2023:

1. How do Google systems identify whether someone has visited a sensitive location? Please provide a complete list of metadata used to make this identification, and any supporting documents.
2. Please provide a complete list of the types of locations Google considers to be sensitive, and thus eligible to be automatically deleted.


¹ <https://blog.google/technology/safety-security/protecting-peoples-privacy-on-health-topics/>

² <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2023/05/09/google-privacy-abortion-data/>


³ <https://accountabletech.org/research/googles-data-collection-and-policies-could-endanger-those-seeking-abortions/>

3. A spokesperson for Google has stated that Google deletes entries for sensitive locations “soon after” a visit. For how long after a user visits a sensitive location does Google store an entry for the visit? When does Google delete the entry?
4. Does Google allow advertisers to target ads based on sensitive location data that can reveal a user’s health information?
5. Will you commit to consistently deleting sensitive location data that pertains to any type of reproductive care, mental health care, and addiction treatment within 24 hours of a user’s visit, on both the user’s device and Google servers? Will you agree to a third-party audit to verify that such a protocol has been successfully implemented?

Sincerely,




Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



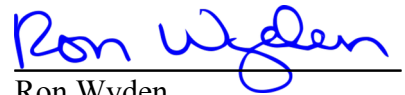
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



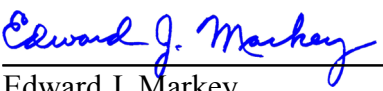
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



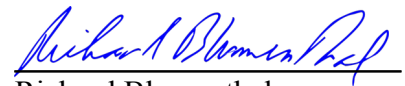
Peter Welch
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Dick Durbin

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Patty Murray

Patty Murray
United States Senator