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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 11, 2011

The Honorable Jon Leibowitz
Chairman
Federal Trade Commission
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20580

Dear Chairman Leibowitz:

I am writing to convey my concern regarding an article in today's *Wall Street Journal* suggesting that a security vulnerability in certain applications or "apps" on the social networking site Facebook, with over 500 million participants worldwide, potentially gave third parties access to personal information of Facebook users. The security firm Symantec has estimated that approximately 100,000 Facebook apps may have inadvertently leaked to third parties millions of "access tokens" which function like spare keys to certain information in users' online profiles.

The article troubles me because many consumers, particularly young consumers, use social networking websites on a regular basis to communicate and exchange messages with friends, often relying upon a sense of control over the information they choose to share. It appears that unbeknownst to them, these "apps" may have leaked our teenagers' profiles or messages, contradicting the sense of control they rely upon and regularly assert.

Consequently, it is critical that vulnerabilities to security system integrity be prevented, and where identified, corrected immediately. As a corollary, consumers must be notified when their personal information is breached to protect them from harm. Following the recent Sony and Epsilon data breaches, this new report marks another high-profile breach in a series of recently alarming and large-scale demonstrations of inadequate security safeguards resulting in personal information disclosure.

I encourage you to investigate this matter as soon as possible to determine whether Facebook has thoroughly fixed the vulnerability, the extent to which "access tokens" are still in circulation on the Internet or stored in server log files and recommendations to protect users from unauthorized access to their profiles. I would appreciate your quick attention to this matter and I request you submit to me and my staff your response by May 25, 2011.

As the Consumer Protection Subcommittee Chairman on the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, I look forward to continuing to work with you as we address data security, breach notification and privacy concerns in the stream of commerce.

Most respectfully,


Mark Pryor