United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 22, 2026

Dear Senator Hickenlooper,

Thank you for your letter. I share your sense of urgency. Tackling the wide-ranging challenges AI poses will be one of our most important tasks in the 120th Congress. We must act quickly to ensure that the American people – not just a handful of powerful technology companies – decide how AI is developed, deployed, and governed.

Recent developments have only underscored the urgency of this challenge. A wave of disruptions across digital infrastructure has been attributed to efforts to prepare cyber defenses in light of AI hacking capabilities. As AI accelerates the discovery of vulnerabilities, not only do those vulnerabilities pose risks to our digital infrastructure but, as we are seeing, efforts to make urgent repairs can destabilize existing systems.

Meanwhile, despite issuing dire warnings about the catastrophic risks posed by advanced models, frontier firms continue to race ahead. Last week, OpenAI released their latest Astra model, GPT - 6.2, which is more difficult to monitor and control than the last iteration. We know that even more powerful models are being developed behind closed doors – and that frontier labs are seeking to turn even more of their development over to AI, with full recursive self-improvement reportedly on the horizon.

And the risks extend beyond the technology itself. They include increasingly complex financing arrangements and enormous capital expenditures underpinning the AI industry's rapid expansion, as well as the consequences of that expansion on our workforce.

We cannot be paralyzed by the scale of the task at hand. Instead, we must mount an ambitious and sustained response, starting with establishing enforceable guardrails today while developing a long-term regulatory framework capable of keeping pace with tomorrow's advances.

As we do so, we will need to resist corrosive corporate influence on the legislative process and oversight responsibilities. It is more important than ever that the American people trust that their representatives are serving them, not those who stand to profit from the continuation of the status quo.

As Majority Leader, I will move forward with an AI agenda in three buckets:

1. Immediately move vital bipartisan AI legislation through the Senate.

While we work toward comprehensive, long-term solutions, Congress can act now to institute basic safety standards to address near-term risks and increase transparency at the frontier companies. I believe opportunities for bipartisan cooperation exist on a number of near-term safety, affordability, and national security measures that members of our Conference have already raised, including:

- **AI Safety:** Legislation to require mandatory, independent evaluation of leading AI companies' models and practices. The status quo of researchers issuing dire warnings without peer or public review, while lawmakers are entirely dependent on selective corporate disclosures about "incidents," must end. Although companies are already responsible for the harm they cause, we should also act today to clarify that AI developers are liable and accountable not just for the products they release, but for risks created by their internal development and the models they do not intend to make public. Given rising danger, we should work to enact basic safety measures in the first 100 days and then, as discussed below, have a Joint Committee build on that work and all the other areas on which AI will impact our lives.

- **Affordability**: Legislation to protect families and small businesses from high electricity bills from data center expansion, and legislation to crack down on the proliferation of scams and fraud – turbocharged by AI technologies – that are draining too many Americans' bank accounts.

- **National Security:** Legislation to strengthen export controls to prevent American materials from being used to irresponsibly push AI development forward around the world and ensure they are enforced.

- **Financial Security**: Legislation to increase transparency of AI corporate governance and financing to improve oversight of risks from the AI sector's financing arrangements and debt structures, especially as these concerns become increasingly immediate.

The Senate must be much more nimble and fast-moving to enact bipartisan solutions, which is why I support efforts to allow faster consideration of broadly bipartisan initiatives. The American Innovation and Choice Online Act is an example of thoughtful, bipartisan legislation that deserved the consideration of the full Senate. To deliver results, it's time to update Senate procedures so that bills with broad support finally have an opportunity to become law.

That is why we should implement the bipartisan Merkley-Daines proposal to allow the full Senate to act more expeditiously on bills that emerge from committees with broad bipartisan support. I think the opportunity for bipartisan progress on AI safety is real. One person should not have the power to stop it. We need Senate rules designed to match the speed of challenges like AI, not the pace of the past century.

2. Establish a bipartisan Joint Committee to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive response.

Given the general use nature of the technology, AI crosses or touches on the jurisdiction of every standing committee in the Senate. In order to complement the important work of these committees and ensure a coordinated approach, I support the creation of a bipartisan, bicameral Joint Committee to work quickly to solicit technical expertise and develop cross-cutting legislative recommendations while empowering members from across the caucus.

While Congress acts to promote safety and transparency immediately, this Committee should begin the critical deliberative work of examining the legal, economic, labor, governmental, social, and moral challenges posed by AI. In addition to technologists, we need experts in domains such as biology, energy, physics, sociology, theology, the humanities, and cybersecurity to bring their experience assessing risks to the table.

The Committee should urgently examine whether to prohibit recursive self-improvement, which could allow capable AI systems to escape human control. It should also evaluate mechanisms, like shutdown mechanisms or "kill switches," to ensure humans retain the ability to intervene when AI systems pose serious risks.

Equally importantly, the Committee should develop a plan to ensure that, as AI advances, workers have economic security, workplace protections, and a sense of dignity. And it must confront questions about competition and the growing concentration of power in the AI industry and develop concrete legislative solutions to the risks it identifies.

To ensure Congressional offices and Committees have the technical support we need, I also believe we should consider the re-establishment of the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment so both Democrats and Republicans in Congress can access expert information independent from the Executive Branch.

3. Empower Committees to exercise critical oversight.

Beyond the needed independent assessments of the current state of AI, the American people deserve answers to their questions about the nature, the dangers, the use, and the impact of this technology on their lives and on our society. Our standing committees and the new Joint Committee will be well-equipped to conduct rigorous oversight of the Administration and relevant corporate activity to help ensure rapid response to emerging issues. As discussed above, that includes changing Senate rules so large bipartisan majorities in Committees can take action that receives expedited consideration by the full Senate. That will empower all Senators, including the talented incoming class.

The challenges we face are historic in nature, and it is incumbent upon Congressional leadership to harness the expertise, interest, and perspectives of our members to develop comprehensive solutions that meet rapidly changing conditions. I am committed to this effort and look forward to addressing these critical challenges together in the 120th Congress.

Sincerely,



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator