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Team,

This morning we're announcing the date for the *2021 MTV EMAs* that will take place in Budapest, based on a deal we had secured two years ago, before the pandemic. This may surprise anyone who knows that in June of this year, Hungary passed anti-LGBTQ+ legislation banning television content featuring gay people during the day and in primetime, only allowing it to run in the overnights.

Let me be clear, it's been [widely reported](#) that if enforced as written, the law could impact mainstream content like *Modern Family* and *Friends*, movies like *Harry Potter*, *Star Trek*, and others. As a result, [ViacomCBS, along with others like Google and Lego, banded together to publicly oppose this law](#) stating it would increase discrimination and harassment against LGBTQ+ people.

I have to be honest with you, as a gay man, my personal emotions got the better of me. After learning this legislation passed, my knee jerk reaction was that we should move the event to another country. However, after my emotions cooled down, I picked up the phone to connect with global LGBTQ+ advocates like [All Out](#), got feedback from LGBTQ+ advocates in Hungary, spoke with Raffaele, Bruce and other team members from around the world, and consulted our LGBTQ+ employee resource group, Emerge. The decision was very clear to all of us. We should not move the event. Instead, we should move forward, using the show as an opportunity to stand in solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community in Hungary and around the world as we continue to fight for equality for all.

As storytellers, we know how much representation matters. Think of the first time you "saw" yourself on TV. The moment you felt seen, heard and represented – it's in those moments that we realize we aren't alone. It's also in those moments when you begin to imagine yourself in other worlds, doing new things and letting yourself dream.

My story was when I saw Pedro Zamora on MTV's *The Real World* – it was the first time in my life that I saw another gay person. I was a gay kid growing up in a steel mill

town in Northeast, Philadelphia. It was the 1990s, and I'd never met another gay person before. My only lifeline was television. It gave me a direct window into a new world, one that gave me hope that I wasn't alone. It inspired me to think of what, or who, I could be when I grew up. Television truly helped me understand who I was, and who I was meant to be.

MTV's *The Real World* was revolutionary. Not only for being the first reality series on television, but for showing difference. That difference – race, class, sexual orientation, religion – was real and unfiltered. And for many of us, it was the first time we ever heard people talking about the things we needed to know as young people growing up, but no one was brave enough to discuss. And, when Pedro – an openly gay, HIV-positive Cuban American man – took the screen, he changed the world, and perspectives. Today, MTV Entertainment Group continues that tradition with some of the most diverse casts and series on television, from the Emmy Award-winning *RuPaul's Drag Race*, to countless number of casts across our shows, and even the first-ever sexually fluid dating show *Are You The One?*.

According to ViacomCBS' soon to be released research study, Reflecting Me: Global Representation On Screen, nearly 85% of people in countries around the world agree that companies making TV shows and movies should commit to increasing diversity and representation on screen. After knowing someone personally, media representation is the #1 way to foster empathy and understand difference.

Said simply, representation matters. And, it especially matters to the kid who is at home, feeling isolated and struggling to understand who they are. This is not just my story. This is the story of people from all different backgrounds in all corners of the world. That kid needs to know there is hope. They need to know they're not alone, and that the world will not only accept them for who they are, but will lift them up and champion them for being true to themselves. And, as queer representation increases, we change the hearts and minds of society at large, we open space for acceptance, and we create a world in which that same kid can feel safer and stronger.

That's why at this year's *EMAs*, we will honor young LGBTQ+ activists in the show with MTV's Generation Change Award in partnership with All Out, to recognize young people in Hungary and around the world who are on the front lines, fighting for equality and for love. We will proudly host our biggest global music event to amplify their voices and their stories. Additionally, we are expanding our partnership with All Out to amplify their campaigns which fight for equality around the world. As we have done for the last 40 years, we will continue to use our content for change and to advocate for equal rights for all.

I'd like to take a moment to thank Bob for his incredible leadership and steadfast support to use our platforms with purpose. I'm deeply grateful to my partners Bruce and Raffaele – together, we locked arms to do the right thing, and to Marva and DeDe for their incredible guidance and advocacy throughout.

A big shout out and thank you to our dedicated and passionate team working in Hungary; you inspire us all with your leadership. And, to our friends at All Out, whose work helps people around the world, thank you for helping us to spark a global conversation and inspire real change.

Finally, to all those kids at home: there is hope, and you will always have a home with us on MTV Entertainment.

Thank you,

Chris

