

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510
(202) 224-3121
<http://www.senate.gov>

August 29, 2023

Delivered via Email

The Honorable Miguel Cardona
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave. SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Cardona:

We write to express deep concerns regarding an alarming new report describing how millions of dollars of funding from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) have flowed into America's K-12 classrooms.¹ The report found that programs vetted and managed by the Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) have infiltrated 34 states nationwide, impacting more than 170,000 students across 143 school districts. We urge you to conduct a thorough, nationwide audit to determine how much funding from hostile foreign governments has flowed to America's K-12 schools. We also urge you to analyze the extent to which other hostile foreign governments, in addition to the PRC, may have already gained access to our K-12 schools.

For nearly two decades, the CCP has engaged in efforts to exert influence in American schools and our education system. Through grants, sister school partnerships, "Confucius Institutes," and other state-sponsored programming, the CCP has worked to gain access to America's education system to advance its own agenda. In a 2016 article, Chinese state-run media reported that the CCP considers Confucius Institutes "important channels" to promote and advance the Belt and Road Initiative.² In 2020, the U.S. Department of State designated Confucius Institutes as a "foreign mission" of the Chinese government and Congress took steps to restrict U.S. Department of Defense funding from universities that host such institutes.³

It is clear that the CCP is using the same playbook to extend information operations into our K-12 classrooms. However, measures to restrict "Confucius Classrooms" or prevent the expansion of other forms of propaganda at the primary and secondary level have yet to be taken. As the 2022 National Defense Strategy states, "[the] most comprehensive and serious challenge to U.S. national security is the PRC's coercive and increasingly aggressive endeavor to refashion...the international system to suit its interests and authoritarian preferences." While we firmly believe that American students should be exposed to a variety of languages and cultures, that instruction should not be a vehicle to advance the interests of a totalitarian power.

The CCP is the greatest threat to America's security today. The CCP's involvement in the K-12 education system further demonstrates how far the Chinese government is willing to expand its influence and promote its authoritarian agenda. We cannot sit idle and allow this expansion of CCP propaganda. Parents deserve transparency and policymakers must know the extent of the problem so we can work on solutions to protect both our students and our national security.

¹ <https://defendinged.org/investigations/little-red-classrooms-china-infiltration-of-american-k-12-schools/>

² https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2016-12/12/content_27640662.htm

³ <https://2017-2021.state.gov/confucius-institute-u-s-center-designation-as-a-foreign-mission/#:~:text=On%20August%2013%2C%202020%2C%20the,the%20People's%20Republic%20of%20China.>

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Accordingly, we urge you to conduct a thorough, nationwide audit to determine how much funding from hostile foreign governments has flowed into America's K-12 schools. We urge you to analyze the extent to which other hostile foreign governments, in addition to the PRC, may have already gained access to our K-12 schools. Please respond no later than September 8th, 2023 with respect to your commitment to perform that audit, as well as its scope of review. We look forward to working with you to prevent our students and their families from falling victim to authoritarian propaganda and urge you to take bold steps to curb the CCP's malign influence in our education system.

Sincerely,



Tim Scott
U.S. Senator



Bill Cassidy, M.D.
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Health
Education, Labor and Pensions



James E. Risch
Ranking Member
Senate Foreign Relations Committee



Tommy Tuberville
U.S. Senator



Roger Marshall, M.D.
U.S. Senator



Rick Scott
U.S. Senate

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Charles E. Grassley
U.S. Senator



Tom Cotton
U.S. Senator



JD Vance
U.S. Senator



Kevin Cramer
U.S. Senator



Eric S. Schmidt
U.S. Senator



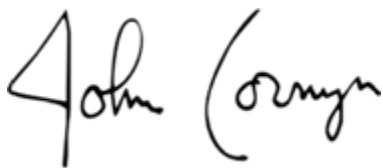
Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



John Barrasso, M.D.
U.S. Senator



John Thune
U.S. Senator



John Cornyn
U.S. Senator



Joni K. Ernst
U.S. Senator

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A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mitt Romney". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "M" and "R".

Mitt Romney
U.S. Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "James Lankford". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "J" and "L".

James Lankford
U.S. Senator