Dear Representative/Senator \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

I write to express my concern regarding Confucius Institutes. These Chinese government-funded centers operate at more than 100 American college campuses to support the Chinese government’s overseas propaganda. China also runs another 500 Confucius Classrooms at American K-12 schools.

These Confucius Institutes and Classrooms threaten the integrity of the American educational system, serve the interests of a foreign authoritarian government, and may compromise American national security. I urge you to investigate Confucius Institutes and Classrooms and to adopt policies that require greater transparency and incentivize American schools to avoid engaging in problematic partnerships with the Chinese government.

A number of studies have shown that Confucius Institutes teach American students a whitewashed version of China’s history and politics and pressure American scholars to silence their critiques of China.

In 2017, the National Association of Scholars (NAS) concluded in a report, [*Outsourced to China: Confucius Institutes and Soft Power in American Higher Education*](https://www.nas.org/projects/confucius_institutes), that “to a large extent, universities have made improper concessions that jeopardize academic freedom and institutional autonomy.” NAS found that Confucius Institutes are operated by a Chinese government agency, the Hanban, which is overseen by officials from the Chinese Ministry of Education, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the State Press and Publications Department Administration (which handles propaganda).

NAS also found that the Hanban provides textbooks and selects and pays the Confucius Institute teachers, who are Chinese nationals trained to present the Chinese government in a positive light. One Confucius Institute director said if pressed to answer a question about Tiananmen Square, where in 1989 the Chinese government massacred democracy demonstrators, she would “show a picture and point out the beautiful architecture.”

In 2014, the [American Association of University Professors](https://www.aaup.org/report/confucius-institutes) (AAUP) also criticized Confucius Institutes as a partnership that “sacrificed the integrity of the university and its academic staff.” The AAUP further noted that “Confucius Institutes function as an arm of the Chinese state and are allowed to ignore academic freedom.”

Marshall Sahlins, Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus of Anthropology and of Social Sciences at the University Chicago, has documented in [*Confucius Institutes: Academic Malware*](http://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/distributed/C/bo20637267.html)numerous examples of Confucius Institutes presenting propaganda or curtailing academic freedom. And a recent documentary, [*In the Name of Confucius*](http://inthenameofconfuciusmovie.com/), reveals footage of Chinese officials describing how Western universities “work for us” in supporting China’s soft power abroad.

Recently the federal government has taken notice of Confucius Institutes. In February [FBI Director Christopher Wray acknowledged](https://www.rubio.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/press-releases?ID=F998DBAA-6C2B-4BA0-891C-7647BDEAD31F), in a Senate hearing on “Worldwide Threats,” that his agency is taking “investigative steps” at Confucius Institutes that may be engaged in espionage.

Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL), Senator Tom Cotton (R-AR), and Representative Joe Wilson (R-SC) have introduced the [Foreign Influence Transparency Act of 2018](https://joewilson.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/congressman-joe-wilson-r-sc-and-senator-marco-rubio-r-fl-introduce-the), which addresses the problem of Chinese government-funded Confucius Institutes and other sources of foreign influence on college campuses by requiring greater transparency. It would require programs such as Confucius Institutes to register under the Foreign Agents Registration Act, and require colleges to disclose more information about foreign donations.

[Representative Seth Moulton (D-MA)](https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2018/03/09/moulton-wants-local-colleges-cut-ties-with-chinese-institute/2l5Y9Oa1WgG3SuapqGCaNP/story.html) has also urged all Confucius Institutes in Massachusetts to close. [Senator Rubio similarly asked](https://www.rubio.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/press-releases?id=576FD128-05B9-4FF6-A01E-E9B8A153C786) all Confucius Institutes and Classrooms in Florida to close.

In 2014, the House Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations under [Representative Chris Smith held a hearing](https://chrissmith.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=397762) on risks posed by Confucius Institutes. Representative Smith asked the Government Accountability Office to issue a report on Confucius Institutes, which the GAO is now beginning work on.

There is much talk of action to address Confucius Institutes, but it is time to enact legislation, exercise oversight, and warn colleges and universities of the dangers that Confucius Institutes bring—dangers to the integrity of the classroom and to the national security of the United States.

We urge you to take [six steps](http://thehill.com/opinion/education/375092-get-chinas-pernicious-confucius-institutes-out-of-us-colleges) to protect American classrooms.

**First, make colleges choose between China’s gifts and federal funding.** Colleges should become ineligible for a portion of federal funding when they accept the Chinese government’s money for a Confucius Institute.

**Second, require financial transparency.** Amend the Higher Education Act to lower the threshold for disclosing foreign gifts from $250,000 to $50,000, about the cost of hiring a [full-time instructor at a four-year public university](https://data.chronicle.com/category/sector/1/faculty-salaries/" \t "_blank). That amount should also include the fair market value of in-kind gifts such as textbooks and teacher salaries paid directly by a foreign donor. The Foreign Influence Transparency Act would accomplish this, but the PROSPER Act, troublingly, would repeal existing Title I disclosure requirements entirely.

**Third, enforce existing law.** The National Association of Scholars [found](http://thehill.com/opinion/education/375092-get-chinas-pernicious-confucius-institutes-out-of-us-colleges) that only 16 of the 100-plus universities with Confucius Institutes have reported Confucius Institute gifts to the Department of Education since 2010. Ask the Justice Department to investigate and sue institutions that fail to disclose these gifts properly.

**Fourth, require Confucius Institutes to register as Foreign Agents.** The Foreign Agents Registration Act exempts “bona fide” academic organizations. Clarify that foreign propaganda shrouded in an educational institute is not exempt.

**Fifth, enforce antidiscrimination law.**

Confucius Institutes regularly engage in discriminatory hiring practices. The American university typically agrees to hire Confucius Institute staff from a pool of candidates vetted and selected by the Chinese government, which routinely discriminates by politics and religion. Ask the Justice Department to investigate and, if proper, pursue legal action against American colleges complicit in discrimination.

**Sixth, hold more hearings.**

Confucius Institutes have the potential to threaten national security, as FBI Director Wray acknowledged. They gag American scholars who are critics of China. They are likely a tool for China to monitor, intimidate, and harass Chinese students studying in America. Representative [Chris Smith](http://thehill.com/people/chris-smith) [held such hearings](https://chrissmith.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=397762" \t "_blank) in 2014 and asked the Government Accountability Office to investigate Confucius Institutes, but this issue bears further scrutiny.

Confucius Institutes are an affront to intellectual freedom, national security, and American interests. It is time for them to close, and it is time for the U.S. to act.

Respectfully,

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