

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 18, 2021

The Honorable Miguel Cardona  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20020

Dear Secretary Cardona:

We write to bring your attention to concerns regarding the presence of Confucius Institutes at American institutions of higher education (IHEs). We urge the Department of Education (DOE) to explore censorship-free alternatives to support the instruction of Mandarin language and Chinese culture, specifically those offered by Taiwan.

Confucius Institutes operate at 55 American colleges and universities, ostensibly to promote the study of Mandarin language and Chinese culture.<sup>1</sup> Confucius Institutes receive funding and oversight primarily from the *Hanban*, an affiliate of the People's Republic of China's (PRC) Ministry of Education.<sup>2</sup> Many recent studies provide examples of PRC officials pressuring faculty at Confucius Institutes to avoid making statements or holding events on topics that officials consider to be in conflict with the PRC's national interests.<sup>3</sup> For these reasons, in August 2020, the State Department designated the Confucius Institute U.S. Center (CIUS) as a foreign mission to the PRC.<sup>4</sup> The *Hanban* has since attempted to avoid this designation by rebranding Confucius Institutes under the guise of an "International Education Foundation," but it remains unacceptable for the PRC to fund any instruction at American IHEs.<sup>5</sup>

As IHEs take prudent steps to mitigate the malign aspects of Confucius Institutes – often through their closure – in a globalized world, there remains high student demand for studies relating to Mandarin language and Chinese culture and history.<sup>6</sup> Taiwan can help the U.S. meet that demand. "Learning Mandarin from Taiwanese teachers means learning Mandarin in an environment free from censorship or coercion," according to the Director of the American Institute in Taiwan.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "How Many Confucius Institutes Are in the United States," National Association of Scholars, 17 February 2021.

<sup>2</sup> "Agreements Establishing Confucius Institutes at U.S. Universities Are Similar, but Institute Operations Vary," *United States Government Accountability Office*, February 2019.

<sup>3</sup> "Confucius Institutes in the United States," *Congressional Research Service*, 15 April 2019; "China's Impact on the U.S. Education System," *United States Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations*, 27 February 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Department of State, "Determination Pursuant to the Foreign Missions Act," *Federal Register*, 24 August 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Rachele Peterson, "China is Rebranding Its Confucius Institutes," *Real Clear Education*, 22 July 2020.

<sup>6</sup> "Confucius Institutes in the U.S. that Are Closing," *National Association of Scholars*, July 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Nick Aspinwall, "U.S. Asks Taiwan to Fill Void as Confucius Institutes Close," *Nikkei Asia*, 2 February 2021.

The U.S.-Taiwan Education Initiative is an exemplary program, for it seeks to increase opportunities for American students to learn Mandarin, while abiding by the U.S. and Taiwan's shared commitment to academic freedom.<sup>8</sup> We assess that DOE could expand the U.S.-Taiwan Education Initiative to provide a censorship-free alternative to Confucius Institutes. We also encourage DOE to consider working with Taipei to expand additional educational programs, or to develop new programs, that support the study of Mandarin language and Chinese culture through in-person and virtual settings.

Cross-cultural learning opportunities remain critical not only to the enrichment of the humanities, but also to our national security. We look forward to supporting your efforts to promote the studies of world languages and cultures, while ensuring academic freedom at our IHEs.

Sincerely,



Marsha Blackburn  
U.S. Senator



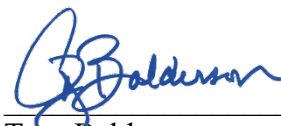
Michelle Park Steel  
Member of Congress



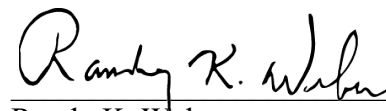
Kevin Cramer  
U.S. Senator



Steve Chabot  
Member of Congress



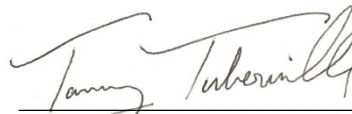
Troy Balderson  
Member of Congress



Randy K. Weber  
Member of Congress



Diana Harshbarger  
Member of Congress

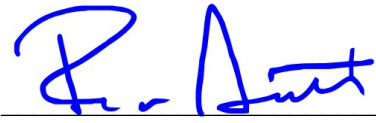


Tommy Tuberville  
U.S. Senator


<sup>8</sup> Maureen McLaughlin and Ashley Clark, "New U.S. Taiwan Education Initiative," *Homeroom*, 7 January 2021.



Mike Braun  
U.S. Senator



Rick Scott  
U.S. Senator



Josh Hawley  
U.S. Senator



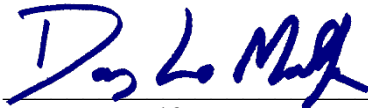
Thom Tillis  
U.S. Senator



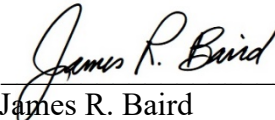
Charles F. Fleischmann  
Member of Congress



Ken Calvert  
Member of Congress



Doug LaMalfa  
Member of Congress



James R. Baird  
Member of Congress



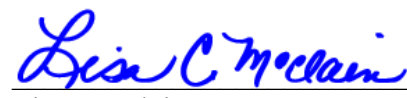
Eric A. "Rick" Crawford  
Member of Congress



Mo Brooks  
Member of Congress



Young Kim  
Member of Congress



Lisa McClain  
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Paul A. Gosar". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and "G".

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Paul Gosar, D.D.S.  
Member of Congress

CC: Mr. Sung Kim  
Acting Assistant Secretary  
Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs  
U.S. Department of State  
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Washington, DC 20520