

# United States Senate

March 12, 2020

COMMITTEES:  
ARMED SERVICES  
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND  
TRANSPORTATION  
JUDICIARY  
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

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

Dear Secretary DeVos:

We write to bring your attention to concerns regarding the presence of Confucius Institutes at colleges and universities that receive federal funds through the Department of Education (DOE).

In February 2019, the Comptroller General of the United States found there were 96 Confucius Institutes operating at institutions of higher education (IHEs) across 44 states and the District of Columbia.<sup>1</sup> This followed a 2017 report from the National Association of Scholars that noted these institutes stifle intellectual freedom.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, in February 2019, a bipartisan Senate investigation found the Chinese government provided more than \$158 million to U.S. schools for Confucius Institutes, the Chinese government controls nearly every aspect of these institutes, and that Chinese directors and teachers at these institutes pledge to protect Chinese national interests.<sup>3</sup>

Congress is concerned with the presence of Confucius Institutes on college campuses. The fiscal year 2019 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L.115-232) specifically prohibited the use of Department of Defense funds for Chinese language instruction provided by a Confucius Institute, or even a Chinese language program at IHEs that host such an institute.

Underscoring these concerns is the lack of transparency concerning the manner in which these institutes operate, and ambiguity regarding the separation of taxpayer funds under Title VI of the Higher Education Act (HEA) from the funds IHEs receive to operate or manage these institutes as part of a foreign language program. Some Confucius Institutes at U.S. schools are part of an academic department or an administrative office, while others report directly to school leadership. Accordingly, do these agreements conflict with Section 117 of the HEA, which requires colleges to report all gifts and contracts from foreign sources that exceed \$250,000? What oversight role does the DOE play in protecting against undue foreign influence on college

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<sup>1</sup> "Observations on Confucius Institutes in the United States and U.S. Universities in China," United States Government Accountability Office, February 2019.

<https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-19-401T> (Accessed March 2, 2020)

<sup>2</sup> "Outsourced to China," *National Association of Scholars*, April 2017.

<https://www.nas.org/reports/outsourced-to-china/full-report> (Accessed March 2, 2020)

<sup>3</sup> "China's Impact on the U.S. Education System," *United States Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations*, February 2019.

<https://www.portman.senate.gov/sites/default/files/PSI%20Report%20China%27s%20Impact%20on%20the%20US%20Education%20System.pdf> (Accessed March 2, 2020)

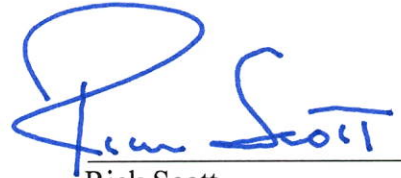
campuses via contracts and implementation agreements? What measures are in place at the DOE to protect against IHEs inappropriately using the J-visa program related to Confucius Institutes?

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your response to our questions.

Sincerely,



Marsha Blackburn  
United States Senator



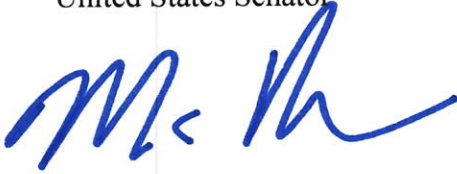
Rick Scott  
United States Senator



Tom Cotton  
United States Senator



James Lankford  
United States Senator



Marco Rubio  
United States Senator



Mike Lee  
United States Senator



Ted Cruz  
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