

**Opening Statement of Senator Tom Carper  
“China’s Impact on the U.S. Education System”  
February 28, 2019**

**Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your attention to this issue and for the bipartisan work that went into this hearing and our report.**

**More than two years ago now, the Russian government launched an unprecedented attack on our country. Using disinformation and stolen emails, they took advantage of Americans’ growing use of social media in an attempt to stir up conflict and influence the 2016 election by boosting the Trump campaign while denigrating Hillary Clinton.**

**Today, reports are already emerging that disinformation campaigns, targeting a number of the Democrats seeking to run against President Trump, have begun.**

**Given what our country has been through in recent years and what we're preparing to grapple with in 2020, it's important that we be vigilant in combatting foreign efforts to influence American public opinion regardless of where they originate.**

**Today, we'll be examining the quiet effort by the Chinese government to improve its image in Americans' minds through its Confucius Institutes.**

**China opened its first Confucius Institute outside of Asia in the United States in 2004 at the University of Maryland. It has since opened roughly 100 of its 500 institutes in our country.**

**In addition, half of the 1,000 Confucius Classrooms that it runs through its Confucius Institutes are in our primary and secondary schools.**

**Activities at the individual Confucius Institutes our staff visited and examined varied a great deal.**

**At one school, the Chinese visitors at the Confucius Institute perform research and work as teaching assistants in for-credit Mandarin classes.**

**At other schools, the Chinese visitors taught more informal, non-credit classes to both college students and members of the community. These classes focused on everything from Mandarin for business travelers to topics like Chinese cooking and art.**

**In a handful of schools, Confucius Institute staff focused almost exclusively on placing visiting language teachers in K through 12 schools in the area.**

**At all of the schools, Confucius Institute staff seemed to focus a significant amount of time on events like Chinese New Year parties.**

**As best we can determine, these institutes spread around our country do not appear to be overt efforts by the Chinese Communist Party to spread pro-China or anti-American propaganda. There's also no evidence we've uncovered that suggests that they're a center for Chinese espionage efforts or any other illegal activity.**

**That said, we nonetheless need to be mindful of where the story told by these Confucius Institutes is coming from.**

**FBI Director Wray and others have expressed concerns about the presence of Confucius Institutes in our schools because they were conceived by and are funded by a Chinese government that has a much different worldview than ours.**

**The \$158 million China has spent on Confucius Institutes in the United States comes from a government that routinely stifles free speech, debate, and dissent in its own country.**

**It's a government that monitors and jails religious and ethnic minorities and has a violent history of oppression.**

**It's also a government that routinely targets us through hacking and industrial espionage and threatens Taiwan and our other close allies in Asia militarily.**

**Participants at Confucius Institute-sponsored activities won't get the full story on any of these issues. That's because, under the contracts U.S. schools have signed with the Chinese government, Chinese officials can veto programming they don't like. And the staff sent from China to run the institutes are prohibited under their individual contracts from doing anything "detrimental to national interests."**

**Despite my concerns about Confucius Institutes and China's goals for them, I welcome greater opportunities for Americans to learn more about China, visit the country, and speak Mandarin.**

**And I want Chinese citizens to visit here and learn more about us and our language and culture, as well.**

**Data reported by the Department of Education indicate that as many as 400 million people in China are attempting to learn English. And according to a 2018 Pew Research study, more than 90 percent of European primary and secondary school students are learning a foreign language. At the same time, only 20 percent of American students are working to learn another language.**

**We need to do better than that. At a time when the world is getting smaller, when our country is growing more diverse, and when so many American jobs are reliant on global trade, it's in our nation's best interest for more Americans to learn foreign languages, especially Mandarin.**

**To the extent that there's unmet demand in our country for Chinese language education, we should be filling it rather than allowing the Chinese government to fill it.**

**The report we've released recommends a number of steps that schools with Confucius Institutes can take to change their relationship with the Chinese government and assert the supremacy of free speech, free debate, and academic freedom on their campuses.**

**We also make recommendations to the U.S. Departments of Education and State to ensure that Confucius Institutes are operating within the law, and we call on the Chinese to stop blocking our efforts to engage in cultural outreach in their country.**

**As I stated earlier, it is crucial that we continue to be vigilant in combatting foreign efforts to influence public opinion in our country. But if we take any other lessons away from today's hearing, I hope it's that, in order to preserve our economic competitiveness and protect our national security, we need to make certain that our students are learning about other cultures and studying Mandarin and other key foreign languages.**

**Thank you, Mr. Chairman.**