

United States Senate

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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

May 8, 2018

President John A. Delaney
University of North Florida
Office of the President
1 UNF Drive
J.J. Daniel Hall, Suite 2800
Jacksonville, Florida 32224-7699

Dear President Delaney:

I write to follow up my letter of February 5, 2018, that described concerns about Chinese government-run Confucius Institutes operating at several Florida academic institutions. Since that letter, the University of West Florida and the Texas A&M System announced that they will terminate their Confucius Institute contracts. They join the University of Chicago and Pennsylvania State University, both of which terminated their Confucius Institutes in 2014, and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, which did so in 2017.

The Executive Branch and Congress continue to express growing concerns about China's aggressive foreign influence operations, as well as a desire to bring greater transparency on the Chinese government and Communist Party's activities here in the United States. In response to a question that I posed at a Senate Select Committee on Intelligence hearing in late February, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Christopher Wray said that the Bureau has "concerns about the Confucius Institutes," and in "certain instances have developed appropriate investigative steps." FBI Director Wray also cautioned that the Chinese government often employs non-traditional intelligence collection and is "exploiting the very open research and development environment that we have" and "taking advantage of it." There is now legislation pending in both the House and Senate, including legislation that I introduced, to require organizations like the Confucius Institutes to register with the Department of Justice as foreign agents under the *Foreign Agents Registration Act*.

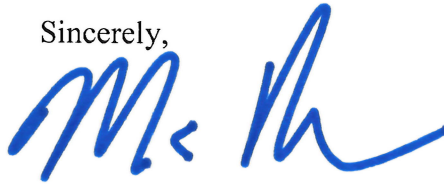
In addition to national security concerns, there remains the very real threat of censorship and self-censorship that any Confucius Institute brings. Sensitive topics like Tiananmen, Tibet and Taiwan are off limits at Confucius Institutes or, if discussed, hew to the Chinese Government and Communist Party line. In the April 2017 report "*Outsourced to China: Confucius Institutes and Soft Power in American Higher Education*," for example, the National Association of Scholars found that when Chinese teachers and directors of Confucius Institutes were asked what they would say to a student who asked about Tiananmen Square, "several replied that they would talk about the Square's historic architecture" as opposed to the Chinese government's brutal suppression of pro-democracy protestors in June 1989.

In that vein and in the spirit of academic freedom, I challenge your institutions to hold open discussions or public events on these upcoming anniversaries, which are “too sensitive” for the Chinese government:

- The June 4th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre, when the Chinese authorities violently suppressed pro-democracy protestors using tanks and live fire to disperse those gathered.
- The July 13th anniversary of the tragic death of renowned Chinese Nobel Prize laureate and prominent political prisoner Liu Xiaobo, who died in Chinese state custody just last year.

These are not simply hypotheticals scenarios, but rather are challenges to you and the academic institution that you lead, and are intended to underscore your own commitment to the fundamental principles of free expression and inquiry amid growing concerns about Confucius Institutes.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator

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