

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

February 12, 2026

**VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION**

The Honorable Kash Patel  
Director  
Federal Bureau of Investigation

Dear Director Patel:

We write to you concerning our oversight efforts relating to the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) influence over our nation's universities and other research institutions.<sup>1</sup> It is well established that our university systems serve as soft targets in China's quest to acquire U.S. knowledge, research, and intellectual property, which is often funded by our taxpayers.<sup>2</sup>

Since 2018, Chairman Grassley has investigated foreign threats to taxpayer-funded research and in 2019 held unclassified and classified hearings on the subject matter.<sup>3</sup> In 2020, Chairman Grassley issued a warning to all 74 colleges, universities, and school districts with known active Confucius Institutes on campus urging each school to request an FBI briefing to fully understand the academic research and national security threats posed by the Chinese government-backed organizations operating on campus as the Chinese government has admitted that these institutes are a part of China's overall propaganda apparatus.<sup>4</sup> And in 2023, Chairman Grassley raised concerns about Chinese Students and Scholars Associations and their potential need to register under the Foreign Agents Registration Act.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Chairman Grassley Press Release, *Grassley to Schools: Confucius Institutes are Fronts for Chinese Propaganda; just ask FBI* (Mar. 20, 2020), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/grassley-schools-confucius-institutes-are-fronts-chinese-propaganda-just-ask-fbi>; see also Chairman Grassley et al, *Letter to DOJ CSSA FARA* (Dec. 8, 2023), [https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/scott\\_grassley\\_et\\_al\\_to\\_doj\\_-\\_cssa\\_fara.pdf](https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/scott_grassley_et_al_to_doj_-_cssa_fara.pdf); Chairman Grassley Press Release, *Chairman Grassley Seeks Transparency from NIH on Foreign Threats to the Research Grant Process* (Oct. 24, 2018), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/chairman-grassley-seeks-transparency-nih-foreign-threats-research-grant-process>; Press release, *Grassley Statement on Harvard Chemist Accused of Concealing Chinese Government Ties*, U.S. Senate Comm. on Fin. (Jan. 28, 2020), <https://www.finance.senate.gov/chairmans-news/grassley-statement-on-harvard-chemist-accused-of-concealing-chinese-government-ties>; Hearing, *Foreign Threats to Taxpayer-Funded Research: Oversight Opportunities and Policy Solutions*, U.S. Senate Comm. on Fin. (June 5, 2019), [https://www.finance.senate.gov/hearings/foreign-threats-to-taxpayer\\_funded-research-oversight-opportunities-and-policy-solutions](https://www.finance.senate.gov/hearings/foreign-threats-to-taxpayer_funded-research-oversight-opportunities-and-policy-solutions); Press release, *Grassley Probes Foreign Threats to Taxpayer-Funded Research at Defense Department*, U.S. Senate Comm. on Fin. (Apr. 2, 2019), <https://www.finance.senate.gov/chairmans-news/grassley-probes-foreign-threats-to-taxpayer-funded-research-at-defense-department>.

<sup>2</sup> Chairman Grassley Prepared Floor Remarks, *Cracking Down on Confucius Institutes and Chinese Propaganda* (May 21, 2021), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/remarks/grassley-cracking-down-on-confucius-institutes-and-chinese-propaganda>; The Select Committee on the CCP, *Chairman Moolenaar Demands Transparency from Universities on National Security Risks Posed by Chinese Nationals in STEM Programs* (Mar. 19, 2025), <https://chinaselectcommittee.house.gov/media/press-releases/chairman-moolenaar-demands-transparency-from-universities-on-national-security-risks-posed-by-chinese-nationals-in-stem-programs>; Federal Bureau of Investigation, *China: The Risk to Academia* (Jul. 2019), <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/china-risk-to-academia-2019.pdf/view>.

<sup>3</sup> Press release, *Grassley Statement on Harvard Chemist Accused of Concealing Chinese Government Ties*, U.S. Senate Comm. on Fin. (Jan. 28, 2020), <https://www.finance.senate.gov/chairmans-news/grassley-statement-on-harvard-chemist-accused-of-concealing-chinese-government-ties>; Hearing, *Foreign Threats to Taxpayer-Funded Research: Oversight Opportunities and Policy Solutions*, U.S. Senate Comm. on Fin. (June 5, 2019), [https://www.finance.senate.gov/hearings/foreign-threats-to-taxpayer\\_funded-research-oversight-opportunities-and-policy-solutions](https://www.finance.senate.gov/hearings/foreign-threats-to-taxpayer_funded-research-oversight-opportunities-and-policy-solutions); Press release, *Grassley Probes Foreign Threats to Taxpayer-Funded Research at Defense Department*, U.S. Senate Comm. on Fin. (Apr. 2, 2019), <https://www.finance.senate.gov/chairmans-news/grassley-probes-foreign-threats-to-taxpayer-funded-research-at-defense-department>.

<sup>4</sup> Chairman Grassley Press Release, *Grassley to Schools: Confucius Institutes are Fronts for Chinese Propaganda; just ask FBI* (Mar. 20, 2020), <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/grassley-schools-confucius-institutes-are-fronts-chinese-propaganda-just-ask-fbi>.

<sup>5</sup> Chairman Grassley Press Release, *Grassley, Colleagues Call Out CCP-Backed Student Organizations for Work as Potential Foreign Agents*, (Dec. 8, 2023) <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/grassley-colleagues-call-out-ccp-backed-student-organizations-for-work-as-potential-foreign-agents>.

On December 17, 2025, the House Select Committee on China and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) released an investigative report revealing how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) exploits the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to gain access and divert American taxpayer-funded research to fuel its military and technological rise.<sup>6</sup> One of the case studies in the report showed that Stanford Professor Wendy Mao, while conducting research on a DOE-funded award, concurrently held a position at the Center for High Pressure Science and Technology Advanced Research (HPSTAR)—an organization within the Chinese Academy of Engineering Physics (CAEP), which has been listed on the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) Entity List since 1997.<sup>7</sup> HPSTAR was added to the BIS Entity List in 2020.<sup>8</sup> HPSTAR was created and is run by Professor Mao’s father, Ho-Kwang Mao, who was a selectee of the Thousand Talents Program, China’s flagship foreign talent recruitment initiative. Ho-Kwang Mao is also a former director of the High-Pressure Collaborative Access Team (HPCAT) within Argonne National Laboratory, which is a DOE National Laboratory born out of the University of Chicago’s work on the Manhattan Project in the 1940s.<sup>9</sup>

According to publication data, Professor Mao has at least 58 co-authored publications acknowledging DOE funding or support, including 31 publications with HPSTAR since 2013.<sup>10</sup> This includes a 2024 publication on iron bonding with light elements that Professor Mao co-authored with fellow Stanford University professor Hong Yang, in collaboration with a researcher from the University of Science and Technology of China (USTC).<sup>11</sup> The research utilized resources from the Advanced Photon Source, a DOE Office of Science User Facility operated by Argonne National Laboratory.<sup>12</sup> Compounding the issue, the research publication credits USTC’s supercomputing center for computational resources, indicating a direct or material reliance on PRC state infrastructure in connection with research funded by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.<sup>13</sup> The publication also acknowledged support from the National Science Foundation’s CSEDI Program and NASA’s Exoplanet Program.<sup>14</sup> The publication lists only Stanford and Chinese co-authors yet explicitly acknowledges NASA funding, which—absent an FBI-certified congressional waiver—raises questions about potential violations of the Wolf Amendment.<sup>15</sup> That federal law prohibits NASA and NASA-funded

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<sup>6</sup> The Select Committee on the CCP Press Release, *Investigation Reveals Energy Department Collaborated with China’s Military on Research* (Dec. 17, 2025), <https://chinaselectcommittee.house.gov/media/press-releases/investigation-reveals-energy-department-collaborated-with-china-s-military-on-research>

<sup>7</sup> Public Announcement, Federal Register/National Archives, Revisions to the Export Administration Regulations: Additions to the Entity List, June 30, 1997, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-1997-06-30/pdf/97-17146.pdf>. (The China Academy of Engineering Physics (CAEP) is China’s primary nuclear weapons research, development, and manufacturing complex. CAEP operates under the authority of the Central Military Commission (CMC), the Chinese Communist Party’s top military organ. In 1997, CAEP was added to the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) Entity List).

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*, See also International Trade Administration, *CSL Search* (Last Viewed Jan. 12, 2026), <https://www.trade.gov/data-visualization/csl-search>, (Search of the CLS for “HPSTAR” shows it was listed on the Entity List for the Department of Commerce, Bureau of Industry and Security on Jun. 5, 2020).

<sup>9</sup> The Select Committee on the CCP, *Containment Breach: The US Department of Energy’s Failures in Research Security and Protecting Taxpayer-Funded Research from Foreign Exploitation* pg. 13, 71 (Dec. 17, 2025), [https://chinaselectcommittee.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/selectcommitteeontheccp.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/doe\\_report\\_containment\\_breach\\_final\\_v3\\_compressed-1.pdf](https://chinaselectcommittee.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/selectcommitteeontheccp.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/doe_report_containment_breach_final_v3_compressed-1.pdf), see also Argonne National Laboratory, About Argonne ANL (Last Viewed Jan 14, 2026), <https://www.anl.gov/argonne-national-laboratory>.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> *Id.* Award No. 80NSSC23K0265

<sup>15</sup> *Consolidated Appropriations Act*, Pub. L. 118-42, Section 526 (2024): (a) None of the funds made available by [the Wolf] Act may be used for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), or the National Space Council (NSC) to develop, design, plan, promulgate, implement, or execute a bilateral policy, program, order, or contract of any kind to participate,

researchers from engaging in bilateral collaboration with Chinese entities.<sup>16</sup> Notably, the Stanford campus outlet published an article on December 1, 2025, highlighting concerns regarding Professor Mao's connections to China's nuclear program while she worked at Stanford.<sup>17</sup>

In accordance with our long-standing oversight of the CCP's influence and exploitation campaign targeting our universities and research institutions, as well as our concerns regarding a potential Wolf Amendment violation, please provide answers to the following questions no later than February 26, 2026:

1. Was a Wolf Amendment waiver sought for NASA Award No. 80NSSC23K0265 or any of the subgrantees of the award?<sup>18</sup> Provide all records, including a copy of the waiver, should it exist.<sup>19</sup>
2. How many Wolf Amendment waivers have been sought from the FBI since FY 2015? Describe in detail, including outcomes, and provide all records.<sup>20</sup>
3. Describe in detail the internal processes at the FBI for the assessment of Wolf Amendment waiver applications.
4. Has the FBI formally briefed NASA headquarters, mission directorates, or program offices on any identified Wolf Amendment violations or systemic compliance risks related to PRC research collaboration? If so, which NASA components were briefed, when did those briefings occur, and what actions did the FBI recommend NASA take?
5. Does the FBI track outcomes of Wolf Amendment-related referrals once provided to NASA or NASA OIG? If so, what trends has the FBI observed?

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collaborate, or coordinate bilaterally in any way with China or any Chinese-owned company unless such activities are specifically authorized by a law enacted after the date of enactment of this Act... (d) Any certification made under subsection (c) shall be submitted to the Committees on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Senate, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, no later than 30 days prior to the activity in question and shall include a description of the purpose of the activity, its agenda, its major participants, and its location and timing.

<sup>16</sup> The Select Committee on the CCP, *Containment Breach: The US Department of Energy's Failures in Research Security and Protecting Taxpayer-Funded Research from Foreign Exploitation* pg. 72 (Dec. 17, 2025), *see also* H.R. 4366 - Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 (Last Viewed Jan. 12, 2026), <https://www.congress.gov/bills/118th-congress/house-bill/4366/text> (most recent appropriations with Wolf Amendment language)

<sup>17</sup> Garret Molloy and Elsa Johnson, *INVESTIGATION: Stanford Earth Sciences Chair Collaborates with China's Nuclear Program*, The Stanford Review (Published Dec. 1, 2025), <https://stanfordreview.org/investigation-stanford-earth-sciences-chair-collaborates-with-chinas-nuclear-program/>; *see also* Hong Yang, Wenzhong Wang and Wendy L. Mao, *Iron Bonding with Light Elements: Implications for Planetary Cores Beyond the Binary System* (Nov. 23, 2024), <https://www.mdpi.com/2073-4352/14/12/1016>

<sup>18</sup> USASpending, *Award Profile Grant Summary FAIN 80NSSC23K0265* (Last Viewed Jan. 12, 2026), [https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST\\_NON\\_80NSSC23K0265\\_080](https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_80NSSC23K0265_080)

<sup>19</sup> "Records" include any written, recorded, or graphic material of any kind, including letters, memoranda, reports, notes, electronic data (emails, email attachments, and any other electronically created or stored information), calendar entries, inter-office communications, meeting minutes, phone/voice mail or recordings/records of verbal communications, and drafts (whether they resulted in final documents."); "Communications" includes communications by any means, including, but not limited to communications by encrypted means, letter, facsimile, email, text/sms or messaging apps, phone call and voice mail, whether or not the means of communication used official Amazon-issued devices, servers, or accounts

<sup>20</sup> Although the Wolf Amendment was enacted in 2011, the Committee uses 2015 as the analytical start date to account for the structure of the peer-review process and the typical lag between research funding, project execution, manuscript submission, and eventual public publication.

Thank you for your prompt review and responses. If you have any questions, please contact our respective staff at (202) 224-5225 and (202) 226-9678.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on the Judiciary



John Moolenaar  
Chairman  
House Select Committee on the CCP