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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHINA

April 16, 2026

Robert Lee Holden Jr.
Chairman & President
United States Heartland China Association
111 West Washington St. Suite 1447
Chicago, Illinois 60602

Dear Mr. Holden,

I write to request verifiable assurances that the United States Heartland China Association (hereinafter “Heartland China”) is not operating as an unregistered agent of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) or the People’s Republic of China (PRC) government and enabling a foreign adversary to covertly influence our local state officials in support of its political objectives.

In November 2023, the Select Committee released its *United Front 101* memo, which explains that United Front work is “a unique blend of engagement, influence activities, and intelligence operations”¹ used by the CCP to “shape its political environment, including to influence other countries’ policy toward the PRC and to gain access to advanced foreign technology.”² As part of this whole-of-society strategy, the Chinese government and CCP United Front organizations are utilizing coopted domestic and foreign organizations and elites, which include cultural, civic, and business associations and leaders, as conduits to engage in overt and covert political activities that further its United Front strategy.³

¹ U.S. House Select Committee on China, Memorandum: United Front 101 (Sept. 2023), <https://selectcommitteeontheccp.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/selectcommitteeontheccp.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/uf-101-memo-final-pdf-version.pdf>.

² *Id.*

³ Rebecca Davis O’Brien, “Chinese Officer Charged With Harassing N.Y. Congressional Candidate,” *The New York Times* (Mar. 16, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/16/nyregion/china-target-congress-campaign.html>; Press Release, New York Resident Pleads Guilty to Operating Secret Police Station for Chinese Government in Lower Manhattan, *U.S. Department of Justice* (Nov. 5, 2024), <https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/new-york-resident-pleads-guilty-operating-secret-police-station-chinese-government-lower>; Press Release, Former High-Ranking New York State Government Employee Charged with Acting as an Undisclosed Agent of the People’s Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party, *U.S. Department of Justice* (Sep. 3, 2024), <https://www.justice.gov/usao-edny/pr/former-high-ranking-new-york-state-government-employee-charged-acting-undisclosed>; Press Release, California Political Operative Arrested on Complaint Alleging He Acted as Illegal Agent of People’s Republic of China, *U.S. Department of Justice* (Dec. 19, 2024), <https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/california-political->

According to Heartland China's website, the organization is "promoting opportunities between the peoples of the Heartland Region and the People's Republic of China."⁴ While the organization claims that it "does no lobbying,"⁵ a review of Heartland China's public activities and partners that are affiliated with the CCP's influence and intelligence bureaucracy raise serious questions about the validity of this assertion.

Heartland China has a long history of dealings with other associations in the United States whose leaders have extensive ties with the CCP's United Front system targeting Americans. For example, in 2021 Heartland China cooperated with the United Chinese Americans (UCA), a U.S.-based 501(c)(3) organization to organize a public seminar that criticized the Department of Justice's counterintelligence efforts against the CCP.⁶ Public reporting highlights how UCA personnel maintain extensive ties to the CCP's United Front system⁷ and are also engaging in political activities in various states.⁸

Heartland China's network of domestic and overseas partners further underscores the risk that the organization may be operating in service of foreign malign influence. Congress defined foreign malign influence in law as "...any hostile effort undertaken by, at the direction of, or on behalf of or with the substantial support of, the government of a covered foreign country with the objective of influencing, through overt or covert means... the political, military, economic, or other policies or activities of the United States Government or State or local governments, including any election within the United States; or... the public opinion within the United States."⁹ Heartland China's Chinese partners include multiple entities that have been identified by the U.S. government as elements of the CCP's influence and intelligence bureaucracy.

Specifically, Heartland China has repeatedly partnered with the U.S. Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC) through programs that bring U.S. local officials to China with the clear aim of influencing their views. The relationship between the organizations indicates a long-term and strategic partnership between Heartland China and an organization that the U.S. State Department has labeled as "a Beijing-based organization tasked

operative-arrested-complaint-alleging-he-acted-illegal-agent-peoples; and Michael Forsythe et al. *How China Influences Elections in America's Biggest City*, The New York Times (Aug. 25, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/25/nyregion/china-consulate-new-york-elections.html>.

⁴ About USHCA, United States Heartland China Association, <https://usheartlandchina.org/about-ushca/>

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ "#UCATalks Nov. 3, 2021 Event: Return of McCarthyism?," *United Chinese Americans*, <https://ucausa.org/ucatalks-nov-3-2021-event-return-of-mccarthyism/>

⁷ Philip Lenczycki, *Exclusive: Anti-ICE Org Backing National Protests Led by Member of CCP-Tied Group*, Daily Caller (Jun. 13, 2025), <https://dailycaller.com/2025/06/13/exclusive-asian-americans-for-progressive-america-leader-united-chinese-americans-ccp/>.

⁸ Philip Lenczycki, *EXCLUSIVE: CCP-Tied Activists Desperately Trying To Keep Chinese Land Grabs Alive Near US Military Bases*, Daily Caller (Mar. 26, 2026), <https://dailycaller.com/2026/03/26/exclusive-ccp-tied-activists-protests-national-security-bills/>.

⁹ 50 U.S.C. § 3059 (2026).

with co-opting subnational governments” that “has sought to directly and malignly influence state and local leaders to promote the PRC’s global agenda.”¹⁰

Most recently on October 29, 2025, CPAFFC and the Hubei Provincial People’s Government hosted the “Yangtze-Mississippi River Basin Dialogue” held in Wuhan, Hubei province. According to Chinese official sources, Heartland China was tasked by CPAFFC to identify and make arrangements for the U.S. mayors, lawmakers, and experts who participated in the dialogue¹¹—material information that Heartland China omitted from its own public description of the event.¹² Previous delegations to China sponsored by Heartland China in collaboration with CPAFFC have also been used as a conduit to facilitate sister city partnership agreements between American and Chinese cities.¹³ The CCP exploits these sister city relationships as cover for its influence operations and United Front work.¹⁴

¹⁰ U.S. Department of State, *Designation of the National Association for China’s Peaceful Unification (NACPU) as a Foreign Mission of the PRC* (Oct. 28, 2020), <https://2017-2021.state.gov/designation-of-the-national-association-for-chinas-peaceful-unification-nacpu-as-a-foreign-mission-of-the-prc/>; National Counterintelligence and Security Center, Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Safeguarding Our Future: Protecting Government and Business Leaders at the U.S. State and Local Level from People’s Republic of China (PRC) Influence Operations* (July 2022), https://www.dni.gov/files/NCSC/documents/SafeguardingOurFuture/PRC_Subnational_Influence-06-July-2022.pdf.

¹¹ The Yangtze River-Mississippi River Basin Dialogue was held in Wuhan [长江-密西西比河流域对话会在武汉举行], Hubei Daily [湖北日报] (Nov. 2, 2025), https://news.hubeidaily.net/pc/c_4714885.html.

¹² Grace Mitchell, *Heartland Leaders’ Delegation to China Advances the Legacy of Subnational and Citizen Diplomacy, United States Heartland China Association* (Feb. 2, 2026), <https://usheartlandchina.org/our-work/heartland-leaders-delegation-to-china-advances-the-legacy-of-subnational-and-citizen-diplomacy/>.

¹³ Jim Banks, Letter to Attorney General Merrick Garland (U.S. House of Representatives, 118th Cong.) (Feb. 22, 2024), <https://cdn01.dailycaller.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/2.22.24-FARA-USHCA-letter-to-DOJ.pdf>; News Release, City of Carmel, Indiana, Sister City Signing in China (Nov. 2, 2023), <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/INCARMEL/bulletins/378d48b>; and Katherine Newton, U.S. Heartland Mayors Bridge the Mississippi and Yangtze Communities with Historic China Visit, *United States Heartland China Association* (Nov. 7, 2023), <https://usheartlandchina.org/delegations/u-s-heartland-mayors-bridge-the-mississippi-and-yangtze-communities-with-historic-china-visit-2/>.

¹⁴ John Moolenaar, Letter to Mayor Connie Boesen (House Select Committee on China, 119th Cong.) (Aug. 18, 2025), https://chinaselectcommittee.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/selectcommitteeontheccp.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/letter-to-des-moines-mayor_final.pdf.



Susan Thornton, U.S. Heartland China Association's Vice President, speaking in Wuhan in October 2025.¹⁵

Other problematic partners of Heartland China include known entities of concern like the China-United States Exchange Foundation (CUSEF).¹⁶ As I have warned in my capacity as Chairman of the House Select Committee on China, CUSEF is an instrument of the CCP's United Front strategy intended to shape Americans' views toward the PRC government.¹⁷ Additionally, Heartland China signed a memorandum of cooperation agreement with the China Agriculture Association for International Exchange (CAAIE) in 2022 and regularly engages with the China Center for International Economic Exchanges (CCIEE).¹⁸ CAAIE is affiliated with the PRC government's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and targets non-PRC governments' agricultural sectors and policies in ways favorable to PRC interests. CCIEE is a think tank under the PRC government-run Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.¹⁹

¹⁵ *Id.* at 9.

¹⁶ Jerry Dunleavy, *Rubio Opposes Biden's Export-Import Bank Nominee over Pro-China Ties*, Washington Examiner (Dec. 1, 2021), <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/2095329/rubio-opposes-bidens-export-import-bank-nominee-over-pro-china-ties/>.

¹⁷ John Moolenaar, Letter to Acting President Claire Shipman (House Select Committee on China, 119th Cong.) (Nov. 4, 2025), https://chinaselectcommittee.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/selectcommitteeontheccp.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/letter-to-columbia_cusef_final.pdf.

¹⁸ Jerry Dunleavy, *Government Calls Out China Influence Groups: Why Does Biden Hire from Their US Collaborator?*, Washington Examiner (Dec. 6, 2021), <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/2609226/government-calls-out-china-influence-groups-why-does-biden-hire-from-their-us-collaborator/>.

¹⁹ Chen Xiaojia, *President of the China Agricultural Association for International Exchange and Chairman of CITIC Construction Attends China-U.S. High-level Agricultural Dialogue*, CITIC Construction (Apr. 29, 2022), <https://www.construction.citic/en/news/latest/2323>; and China Agricultural International Exchange Association [中国农业国际交流协会], Baidu [百度],

<https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E4%B8%AD%E5%9B%BD%E5%86%9C%E4%B8%9A%E5%9B%BD%E9%99%85%E4%BA%A4%E6%B5%81%E5%8D%8F%E4%BC%9A/197115>; The China Center for International Economic Exchanges was transferred in its entirety to the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences [中国国际经济交流

These partnerships and relationships raise concerns about the significant entanglement of a foreign adversary with Heartland China's advocacy. These extensive ties to PRC government-linked organizations also raise serious doubts that Heartland China's many programs – including agricultural roundtables, business seminars, student forums and trips to China hosting U.S. elected officials – may be controlled, directed, and funded by the CCP or PRC government-linked entities, and therefore may violate U.S. laws that are intended to ensure transparency in foreign influence and other political activities.

The *Foreign Agents Registration Act* requires an “agent of a foreign principal”²⁰ engaging in covered “political activities” in the United States to register with the Department of Justice. Covered activities are construed broadly and may include “any activity that the person engaging in believes will, or that the person intends to, in any way influence any agency or official of the Government of the United States or any section of the public within the United States with reference to formulating, adopting, or changing the domestic or foreign policies of the United States or with reference to the political or public interests, policies, or relations of a government of a foreign country or a foreign political party.”²¹

To better understand Heartland China's ability to comply with applicable U.S. laws, I request the following documents by 7 May 2026:

1. A list of all programs, including roundtables, seminars, student forums, exchanges, held between Heartland China in China or with Chinese organizations, including a list of participating individuals and entities from January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2025.
2. Records of all contacts—any oral or written communication (including electronic)—made by Heartland China with local U.S. officials, a covered executive branch official or a covered legislative branch official.²²
3. Copies of all agreements, amendments, and supplemental records between Heartland China and all of its Chinese partners, including CPAFFC, CAAIE, CCIEE, and CUSEF from January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2025.
4. Records sufficient to show all foreign funding received by Heartland China from the People's Republic of China and PRC-based entities to the present from January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2025.

The CCP's United Front operations are persistent, pervasive, and target every level of decision maker in the United States. State and local leaders are especially vulnerable. Heartland China should immediately terminate its relationship with all CCP United Front actors and cease serving as a pawn in the subnational influence operations of our foremost foreign adversary.

中心, 整体划转到中国社会科学院], The Beijing News [新京报] (January 19, 2026), <https://m.bjnews.com.cn/detail/1768802715129901.html>.

²⁰ 22 U. S. C. §611 (c)

²¹ Foreign Agents Registration Act, FARA Index and Act, U.S. Department of Justice, National Security Division, <https://www.justice.gov/nsd-fara/fara-index-and-act>; 22 U. S. C. §611 (o)

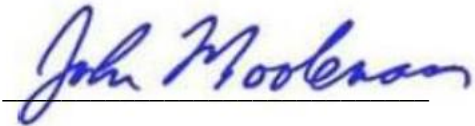
²² 2 U.S.C. § 1602

Mr. Robert Lee Holden Jr.
April 16, 2026
Page 6 of 6

House Resolution 5 delegates to the U.S. House Select Committee on Strategic Competition between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party broad authority to investigate and submit policy recommendations on countering the economic, technological, security, and ideological threats of the Chinese Communist Party to the United States and allies and partners of the United States. Upon receipt of this letter, please maintain and preserve all hard copy and electronic documents, including electronic communications, related to the subject matter of this letter.

Thank you for your action in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Moolenaar". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

John Moolenaar
Chairman
House Select Committee on the CCP