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House of Representatives

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August 18, 2025

Marc Elrich
Executive of Montgomery County
Isiah “Ike” Leggett Executive Office Building
101 Monroe Street, 2nd Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Mr. Elrich,

It has come to my attention that students in Maryland have been targeted for influence operations by an organization affiliated with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in an attempt to influence American youths. This case involves a sporting competition and exchange in which 31 students from across 12 high schools in the Montgomery County Public School system participated in April. The trip was sponsored by the People’s Republic of China (PRC) government and the China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE).¹

While the CEAIE presents itself as a “non-profit social entity”² engaged in benign international educational exchanges, it conceals the organization’s ideological motive and its ties to the CCP from foreign audiences. Article 3 of CEAIE charter indicates that the organization adopts “Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory ... and Xi Jinping Thought ... as the guiding ideology and action plan,” and integrates Party work into the complete operational and developmental process of the organization.³ Article 4 emphasizes how CEAIE is subject to the absolute control of the CCP and that it would “adhere to the overall leadership of the Chinese Communist Party.” In pursuit of this mission and mandate, the organization established a party cell within the management to carry out CCP directives.⁴ Notably, CEAIE’s English website omits both material elements of the organization’s subordinate relationship to the CCP and its role as the Party’s influence agent.⁵

¹ Maryam Shahzad, *MCPS Athletes Gear Up For Pickleball Trip to China*. MONTGOMERY COMMUNITY MEDIA (Mar. 25, 2025) available at www.mymcmmedia.org/mcps-athletes-gear-up-for-pickleball-trip-to-china/.

² Available at <https://en.ceaie.edu.cn/pages?columnid=70>.

³ Available at <https://www.ceaie.edu.cn/dist/#/us>.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Available at <https://en.ceaie.edu.cn/pages?columnid=70>.

Official reports further underscore the subservient ties of CEAIE to the CCP. According to the PRC Ministry of Education, CEAIE is “a national organization specializing in non-governmental foreign education exchanges under the leadership of the Party Committee of the Ministry of Education...in accordance with the requirements of ‘assisting the government, bridging the government and society, and leading the industry.’”⁶

The linkage between CEAIE and the CCP’s United Front system is cemented by the fact that the CEAIE president, Dr. Limin Liu, has current and prior affiliations with organizations with clear ties to the CCP’s United Front system. For example, Liu is dual hatted as the vice president of the Western Returned Scholars Association,⁷ an organization subordinate to the United Front Work Department.⁸ Dr. Liu previously served as a member of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). The CPPCC “is the highest-ranking entity overseeing the United Front [*sic*] system.”⁹ It is unlikely a coincidence that most other members of CEAIE’s leadership team have similar ties to the CCP’s United Front system (refer to appendix).¹⁰

While genuine people-to-people connections and sports diplomacy can be critical channels for promoting mutual understanding, exchanges facilitated by CEAIE, an organization associated with the CCP’s United Front system, are far from authentic cultural engagements. As a congressional report found, United Front work is “a Leninist approach to foreign and internal affairs that involves rallying support for Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and neutralizing opposition to its policies and authority.”¹¹

The U.S. National Counterintelligence and Security Center (NCSC) has assessed that “many quasi-official entities or proxies involved in united front work and foreign influence operations whose ties to the CCP or PRC government may be hidden or not readily apparent.”¹² In short, the CEAIE funded exchange is a front for the CCP’s influence operations. NCSC

⁶ Available at http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/moe_2082/2024/2024_zl13/202412/t20241224_1169712.html.

⁷ Available at <https://www.ceaie.edu.cn/dist/#/us>.

⁸ Available at http://www.wrsa.net/content_41469315.htm.

⁹ Alexander Bowe, *China’s Overseas United Front Work*, U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission (Aug. 24, 2018) available at www.uscc.gov/research/chinas-overseas-united-front-work-background-and-implications-united-states.

¹⁰ Available at <https://www.ceaie.edu.cn/dist/#/us>.

¹¹ Lauren Menon, *China’s Foreign Missions in the United States*, U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission (July 17, 2024) available at www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/2024-07/Chinas_Foreign_Missions_in_the_United_States.pdf.

¹² *Safeguarding Our Future: Protecting Government and Business Leaders at the U.S. State and Local Level from People’s Republic of China (PRC) Operations*, The National Counterintelligence and Security Center (July 2022) available at www.dni.gov/files/NCSC/documents/SafeguardingOurFuture/PRC_Subnational_Influence-06-July-2022.pdf.

further noted how “[t]he PRC may also exploit city-to-city partnerships between the United States and China ... to press its agendas.”¹³

The Select Committee has consistently highlighted the insidious nature of sister-city relations with China and how they advance CCP propaganda and malign influence. The sister-city relationship between Montgomery County and Xi’an¹⁴ is especially disconcerting given how the CCP uses these relationships to promote CCP and PRC state interests. In June, the Select Committee sent a letter to Mayor Muriel Bowser of the District of Columbia, asking her office to review the city’s sister city ties with Beijing.¹⁵ I have additionally introduced a bill (H.R. 4519) that would prohibit our nation’s capital from establishing or maintaining sister city relations with jurisdictions located within foreign adversaries including the PRC.

As Montgomery County School Board President Julie Yang stated: “This [exchange] is not just about pickleball, this is about building bridges—building bridges among young people, building bridges among communities, and building bridges among cultures.”¹⁶ Ms. Yang is right that the sporting competition CEAIE funded is clearly not just about pickleball; it is a tool used by the CCP to expand its influence over the American public. American youths should not be used as propaganda tools of the Chinese government to legitimize its authoritarian control or assert its undue influence on the American population.

I recommend that Montgomery County cease all future engagements with CEAIE and the CCP, as well as the CCP’s proxies, and conduct a thorough and comprehensive review of all the County’s exchange programs with the PRC.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,


John Moolenaar
Chairman

cc: Montgomery County Public School Board

¹³ *Id.*



¹⁴ *Xi’an, China*, Montgomery Sister Cities, *available at* www.montgomerysistercities.org/xian.

¹⁵ Letter from the Hon. John Moolenaar, Chairman, House Select Committee on the CCP, et. al. to the Hon. Muriel Bowser, Mayor, Washington, D.C. (June 4, 2025).

¹⁶ *Supra*, n. 1.


Appendix:

List of CEAIE Leadership

<u>President</u>	
	<p>Liu Limin/ 刘利民</p> <p>Liu Limin is the President of CEAIE. He concurrently serves the Vice President of the Western Returned Scholars Association and Vice Director of Xianzi Zeng Education Foundation. His previous positions include the Chairperson of the University Council of Capital Normal University, Director-General of Beijing Municipal Education Commission, Director of the Education Inspectorate Office of Beijing Municipal Government, and Vice Minister of Education of China. He was a member of the 13th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.</p>
<u>Vice Presidents</u>	
	<p>Lin Jianhua/ 林建华</p> <p>Lin Jinhua is a Vice President of CEAIE. He concurrently serves as the President of the China Senior Professors Association. A chemist by training, he served as president of Peking University from 2015 to 2018. He was also previously president of Chongqing University from December 2010 to June 2013, and president of Zhejiang University from June 2013 to February 2015. He earned a doctorate in chemistry from Peking University in 1986 and studied at Max Planck Institute for Solid State Research, Iowa State University, and Ames Laboratory from 1988 to 1993.</p>

	<p>Guo Dongming/ 郭东明</p> <p>Guo Dongming is a Vice President of CEAIE. He is concurrently the Chairman of the Liaoning Association for Science and Technology. He previously served as the President of Dalian University of Technology from 2014-2023 and was elected as academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering in 2011.</p>
	<p>Jiao Yang/ 焦扬</p> <p>Jiao Yang is a Vice President of CEAIE. Jiao is a senior media professional and has previously held several roles, including Secretary of the Party Committee at Fudan University, Secretary of the Communist Youth League Committee of Fudan University; Vice Director of the News Office of the Municipal Government of Shanghai; Head of the Bureau of Press and Publication and the Copyright Administration of Shanghai; Vice Director of the Propaganda Department of the Communist Party of Shanghai; and Director of the Committee of Spiritual Civilization Construction of Shanghai. Jiao also served as Chairperson of the All-China Women's Federation of Shanghai and Vice Chairperson and Secretary of the All-China Women's Federation. She was also the 10th and 11th member of the Municipal Committee of Shanghai, the 11th member of CPPCC, the 14th and 15th the representative of the Shanghai Municipal People's Congress.</p>
	<p>Ren Shaobo/ 任少波</p> <p>Ren Shaobo is a Vice President of CEAIE. He has been concurrently serving as Zhejiang University's Party Committee Secretary General since 2019 and a Member of the 14th Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, which runs from 2023 to 2028. Ren held numerous editorial positions within the propaganda units of the university's Party Committees. He served as Deputy to the 20th</p>

	<p>National Congress of the Communist Party of China, member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. Ren also served as the Deputy to the 13th National People's Congress of Zhejiang Province, Deputy to the 13th National People's Congress of Hangzhou City, and member of the 15th Zhejiang Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China.</p>
	<p>Lu Gang/ 路钢</p> <p>Lu Gang is a Vice President of CEAIE. Lu has held several other roles, including Head of the Department of Mathematics; Vice President, President, and Director of the Hubei Provincial Department of Education; Secretary of the Party Group; Secretary of the Hubei Provincial Party Committee's Higher Education Working Committee; Director of the Provincial Government's Education Supervision Office; and Chief inspector of Central China Normal University. From November 2008 to December 2017, Lu served as the Party Secretary of Huazhong University of Science and Technology (at the vice-ministerial level). He was a Member of the 8th, 9th, and 10th Hubei Provincial Party Committee, delegate to the 16th, 17th, and 19th National Congresses of the Communist Party of China, and delegate to the 10th and 11th National People's Congress.</p>
	<p>Zhou Xun/ 周旬</p> <p>Zhou Xun is a Vice President of CEAIE. He is concurrently the Secretary of the Party Committee of Chongqing Federation of Enterprises. He previously served as Deputy Director of Chongqing Municipal Education Committee and Deputy Secretary of the Municipal Party Committee Education Working Committee, during which he was seconded to serve as Deputy Director of the Sports, Health and Art Department</p>

	<p>and Planning and Construction Department of the Ministry of Education. He also served as Deputy Secretary-General of Chongqing Municipal Party Committee (at the level of director-general), Executive Vice President of Chongqing Municipal Party School, Executive Vice President of Chongqing Administrative College (at the level of director-general). Additionally, he held roles as Secretary of Chongqing Yubei District Committee; Deputy Director and Member of the Party Leadership Group of Chongqing Municipal People's Congress Standing Committee; Secretary-General, Director of the General Office, and Secretary of the Party Leadership Group of Chongqing Municipal People's Congress Standing Committee; Secretary of the Party Committee of Chongqing University (at the level of vice minister); Deputy Secretary and Deputy Director of the Party Leadership Group of Chongqing Municipal People's Congress Standing Committee.</p>
	<p>Zhang Xiuqin/ 张秀琴</p> <p>Zhang Xiuqin is a Vice President of CAEIE. From May 2014 to July 2016, she served as Ambassador-General of the Permanent Mission of China to UNESCO. Zhang joined the Ministry of Education in 1981 and held various positions, including Deputy Director of the Department of Overseas Students, Director of the Department of Foreign Affairs, and Deputy Director of the Department of International Cooperation and Exchanges of the Ministry of Education. In 1988, she was assigned to the Education Department of the Chinese Embassy in the United States as Third Secretary. From 1995 to 1998, she served as Education Counselor at the Chinese Consulate General in Toronto. In 2004, she became Secretary-General of the China Scholarship Council. In December 2007, she became Director-General of the Department of International Cooperation and Exchanges of the Ministry of</p>

	Education, concurrently serving as Director of the Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan Affairs Office.
	<p>Wang Yongli/ 王永利</p> <p>Wang Yongli is a Vice President of CAEIE. He is concurrently an advisor to the China-UK Basic Education International Exchange Steering Committee since 2023. Wang previously served as the Secretary General of CAEIE and held multiple overseas posts for the Ministry of Education, including assignments in Canada, the United Kingdom, and Singapore. He has also served as Deputy Director of Hanban, and Deputy Director-General within Confucius Institute Headquarters.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Secretary-General</u></p>	
	<p>Yang Jun/ 杨军</p> <p>Yang Jun has served as the Secretary-General of CEAIE since March 2025. He previously served as Deputy Director of the China-Foreign Language Exchange and Cooperation Center of the Ministry of Education.</p>