

**Opening Statement of Rep. Tim Walberg (R-MI), Chairman**

**Committee on Education and Workforce**

**Markup of H.R. 1048, H.R. 649, H.R. 1069, H.R. 1005, H.R. 1049**

**February 12, 2025**

(As prepared for delivery)

The Committee meets today to consider five bills that will enhance the safety and health of America's students.

Before we begin, I would like to welcome Delegate James Moylan to the Committee. He will be added to the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education; the Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development; and the Subcommittee on Workforce Protection.

Turning to the bills we will consider, the Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act, introduced by Rep. Thompson, empowers food service providers and parents to make choices regarding the health and well-being of our school children. Under current Obama-era restrictions, milk choices are limited to fat-free and low-fat options in our nation's schools. Washington bureaucrats have restricted milk choices diminishing well-rounded meals for children and imposing regulatory hurdles for schools. School children are at risk of dairy underconsumption—not overconsumption—so the healthy path forward is to expand nutritional choices for students and parents. This bill passed the House last Congress with strong bipartisan support, and I look forward to its passage through this Committee again today.

Another bill we will consider today is the Defending Education Transparency and Ending Rogue Regimes Engaging in Nefarious Transactions (DETERRENT) Act. America's foreign adversaries are targeting our nation's students. From stealing

research, to pushing propaganda, to censoring free speech, colleges and universities are on the frontlines of malign foreign interference. Section 117 of the Higher Education Act requires institutions to report foreign gifts and contracts over \$250,000. The goal of section 117 is to provide much-needed sunlight on these transactions so the American people have the transparency they deserve. Unfortunately, many schools fail to report these foreign gifts and funding, leaving foreign actors with a stranglehold on U.S. academic institutions.

The effects of this unchecked influence are grave. A congressional investigation last year found multiple examples of problematic Chinese partnerships with top research universities involving highly sensitive military technology. Studies have also found billions in undisclosed foreign funds to universities helped fuel antisemitism on college campuses.

The Biden-Harris administration failed to open a single section 117 investigation, illustrating the administration's unwillingness to treat foreign influence as a serious threat. Fortunately, this Committee is taking action. Rep. Michael Baumgartner has reintroduced the DETERRENT Act, which provides transparency and clarity by slashing the reporting dollar threshold, closing reporting loopholes, requiring disclosures for faculty and endowments, and specifically combatting America's biggest countries of concern such as Russia and China. I'd also like to highlight that DETERRENT includes bills from my colleagues Rep. Harris, Rep. Owens, and Rep. Messmer. Last Congress, the DETERRENT Act passed the House 246 to 170, with the support of 215 Republicans and 31 Democrats. Our colleges and universities have a "take foreign money first, ask questions later" mindset. This needs to change.

This mindset also needs to change in K-12. Chinese Communist Party (CCP) influence in American classrooms is pervasive across all levels of education. In K-12 schools, Confucius Classrooms pose as cultural exchange centers yet often act as vehicles for CCP propaganda. These CCP propaganda outposts have infiltrated more than 500 American K-12 schools, and their grip on education threatens America's classrooms.

The CCP's Confucius Classrooms pose a national security risk, a geopolitical security risk, and an academic security risk. To combat these threats, the Committee will consider three bills to counter the CCP's influence and ensure that schools are transparent about their funding sources.

First, the PROTECT Our Kids Act, from Rep. Hern and Rep. Kevin Kiley, combats foreign interference by halting the flow of CCP funds to K-12 schools. Second, the

CLASS Act, from Rep. Joyce and Rep. Michael Rulli, ensures transparency by requiring schools to disclose the source of any foreign funding. And finally, the TRACE Act, from Rep. Bean and Rep. Ryan Mackenzie, empowers parents by giving them the right to know about foreign-funded resources or personnel.

Together, these three bills will help ensure that American classrooms teach American values, not CCP values.

I'm looking forward to passing these bills; taken together, today's markup package will keep students healthier and safer.