

JIM BANKS
THIRD DISTRICT, INDIANA



COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE
STRATEGIC COMPETITION
BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE
CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1403

January 30, 2024

Mayor Sue Finkam
75 Veterans Way
Suite 120
Carmel, IN 46032

Dear Mayor Finkam,

I am writing to you regarding a disturbing report from the *Washington Post* that describes efforts by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to influence elected officials last year in Carmel, Indiana.

Your predecessor, former Mayor Jim Brainard, along with five other U.S. mayors, visited Hong Kong as well as the Chinese cities of Wuhan, Nanjing, Suzhou, and Shanghai over the course of a ten-day tour of China in November 2023. The trip was paid for by the U.S. Heartland China Association (USHCA), which previously appointed Mayor Brainard as its vice chair. The USHCA has collaborated with CCP United Front Work Department cut-outs and other Chinese state-sponsored organizations. The United Front Work Department is a CCP operation that aims to infiltrate and influence the United States and other foreign governments.

During his visit to Wuhan, Mayor Brainard signed a so-called “sister-city” agreement with Xiangyang in China's Hubei province. The CCP has entered into sister-city agreements with over 150 cities across the United States in an effort to influence state and local government.

China has successfully leveraged sister-city agreements to force non-American, foreign politicians to endorse its one-China policy and to oppose policies that could harm China. In February 2020, former Secretary of State Michael Pompeo outlined the dangers of sister-city agreements during the annual National Governors Association meeting, warning governors that they should actively work to identify and combat CCP infiltration of state and local government.

Today, at a Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party hearing, I had the opportunity to ask former Secretary Pompeo about Mayor Brainard's visit, sister-city agreements, and China's efforts to influence state and local officials. He explained:

“When the Chinese Communist Party shows up at your school and offers a free swing set, it is not because they care about the health of your children... They may show up and give you some temporary lift, but in the end, it is about them, not us... This is an effort at every level for the Chinese Communist Party to have the capacity to influence our government. The Chinese Communist Party is truly evil.”

The Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party is leading Congress's efforts to combat China's illicit influence in our country, and I am committed to fighting this influence in Indiana and other states. Indiana state lawmakers are taking on CCP influence in our state as well. Today, the General Assembly advanced Rep. Culp's H.B. 1183, which would prohibit Chinese nationals from owning or leasing agricultural land in Indiana. You have a golden opportunity to play a crucial part in these efforts and undo others' mistakes by disentangling Carmel from the Chinese Communist Party.

I sincerely request that you withdraw Carmel from its sister city agreement with Xiangyang and that you and all Carmel city officials abstain from any further trips organized by CCP-aligned groups.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Banks". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Jim Banks
Member of Congress