

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 12, 2026

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Jared Isaacman
Administrator
National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Dear Administrator Isaacman:

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.¹ 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.²

Since 2018, Chairman Grassley has investigated foreign threats to taxpayer-funded research and in 2019 held unclassified and classified hearings on the subject matter.³ 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.⁴ 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.⁵

¹ 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; 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>; 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>.

² 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>.

³ 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-ofconcealing-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>; 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-defensedepartment>.

⁴ 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>.

⁵ 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.⁶ 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 1997.⁷ HPSTAR was added to the BIS Entity List in 2020.⁸ 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.⁹

According to publication data, Professor Mao has at least 58 co-authored publications acknowledging DOE funding or support, including 31 publications with HPSTAR since 2013.¹⁰ 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).¹¹ The research utilized resources from the Advanced Photon Source, a DOE Office of Science User Facility operated by Argonne National Laboratory.¹² 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 (NASA).¹³ The publication also acknowledged support from the National Science Foundation’s CSEDI Program and NASA’s Exoplanet Program.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ That federal law prohibits NASA and NASA-funded

⁶ 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>

⁷ 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).

⁸ *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).

⁹ 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, see also Argonne National Laboratory, About Argonne ANL (Last Viewed Jan 14. 2026), <https://www.anl.gov/argonne-national-laboratory>.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *Id.* Award No. 80NSSC23K0265

¹⁵ *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

researchers from engaging in bilateral collaboration with Chinese entities.¹⁶ Notably, a 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.¹⁷

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. Provide all records for Award No. 80NSSC23K0265 including subaward records.¹⁸
2. For Award No. 80NSSC23K0265, did NASA seek an FBI-certified congressional waiver as required by the Wolf Amendment? If not, provide an explanation on why a waiver was not sought and all records as to why NASA did not seek a waiver.¹⁹ If a waiver was sought, provide the outcome of the waiver application and all records related to the waiver.
3. Provide all internal award and subaward data for NASA research funding for fiscal years 2015–2026, including records sufficient to identify the total number of awards, subawards, and pass-through funding arrangements; the identity of all prime recipients and subrecipients; award amounts; research subject areas; performance periods; and all known foreign institutional affiliations of recipients or subrecipients.²⁰
4. What internal legal guidance, memoranda, or policy interpretations govern NASA's application of the Wolf Amendment, and when were they last updated?
5. What processes does NASA have in place to monitor Wolf Amendment compliance after an award is issued, including the identification of new or undisclosed PRC institutional participation, subawards, data-sharing arrangements, or research collaborations that arise during the period of performance, and how does NASA enforce corrective action when such activity is identified?

(NSC) to develop, design, plan, promulgate, implement, or execute a bilateral policy, program, order, or contract of any kind to participate, 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.

¹⁶ 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/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/4366/text> (most recent appropriations with Wolf Amendment language)

¹⁷ 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>

¹⁸ "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).

¹⁹ USA Spending, *Award Profile Grant Summary FAIN 80NSSC23K0265* (Last Viewed Jan. 12, 2026), https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_80NSSC23K0265_080

²⁰ 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.

6. How many Wolf Amendment compliance reviews has NASA conducted since 2015, and what were the outcomes?
7. How many awards have been suspended, modified, or terminated due to Wolf Amendment concerns since 2015?
8. Describe the process NASA uses to submit FBI certified congressional waivers for the Wolf Amendment. Additionally, how many Wolf amendment waivers has NASA submitted since 2015? Of those submissions, how many have been approved and rejected since 2015?

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