



PARENTS DEFENDING EDUCATION

**ACTION**

Chairman James Risch  
Ranking Member Jeanne Shaheen  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
423 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC, 20510

January 8, 2025

Dear Chairman Risch and Ranking Member Shaheen,

I write to urge the swift confirmation of Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) to serve as the 72<sup>nd</sup> Secretary of State of the United States. Throughout his time in public service, Sen. Rubio has built his legislative career on advancing the national interests of the United States and ensuring our country is well positioned to protect itself against adversaries. He has a unique understanding of the threats we face, particularly from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and has made it his mission in Congress to help address our national security vulnerabilities so the government is better equipped to protect its citizens from foreign threats.

At Parents Defending Education Action, we witnessed this proactive and America-first approach from Sen. Rubio firsthand. Last year our partner organization, Parents Defending Education, released a comprehensive report exposing how the CCP had funneled more than \$18 million into school districts across 34 states and Washington, D.C. Shortly after our report went public, Sen. Rubio introduced legislation to fix the security gaps our report had identified. His *Protecting Education from Malign Foreign Influence Act of 2023* would have helped to prevent foreign money from known adversaries from flowing into our K-12 schools and universities, created more funding transparency at academic institutions that receive federal funding, and required the Department of Education to submit an annual report to Congress detailing any connections these schools have with these designated foreign countries.<sup>1</sup> Our organization proudly supported this legislation, and we also saw it as a testament to how seriously Sen. Rubio takes national security matters.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Rubio, Colleagues Introduce Bill to Protect U.S. Schools From China's Influence." Press Release. Office of Senator Marco Rubio. December 8, 2023. <https://www.rubio.senate.gov/rubio-colleagues-introduce-bill-to-protect-u-s-schools-from-chinas-influence/>

<sup>2</sup> "STATEMENT: PDE Action Supports Protecting Education from Malign Foreign Influence Act of 2023." Parents Defending Education Action. December 8, 2023. <https://actionpde.org/statement-pde-action-supports-protecting-education-from-malign-foreign-influence-act-of-2023/>

Putting an end to foreign influence in our academic institutions is an important issue to millions of parents across the country. Polling has shown that nearly 90 percent of voters agree that “schools should be required to disclose when they accept money from foreign governments.”<sup>3</sup> Parents have also seen how foreign actors have exploited situations on U.S. campuses and classrooms to further their malicious objectives. Since the horrific terrorist attack on Israel on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, terrorist-sympathizing demonstrations have erupted across U.S. schools and even more alarmingly, some of the protests have had direct ties to terrorist organizations. A report published earlier this year by the House Committee on Education and the Workforce detailed how an event held by students at Columbia University featured a speaker from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PLFP), a U.S. designated foreign terrorist organization.<sup>4</sup> As recently as last month it was reported that three students at George Mason University in Virginia were “expelled over their ties to terrorist groups” and one student was “charged with plotting a mass casualty attack at the Israel’s consulate in New York.”<sup>5</sup>

It is devastating to see what has transpired in our academic environments. But none of this should be surprising – over the past four years we have had leadership in the White House and throughout the Biden administration, including the State Department, who have been more interested in appeasing America’s enemies than holding them accountable. This has trickled down into other sectors of our society, including our schools, and created environments that have allowed the enemy’s propaganda to spread. To stop this disease from continuing to infect students’ minds, we need strong national leadership at the top to put an end to the anti-America and anti-West propaganda we have seen promulgated in our schools. Sen. Marco Rubio as Secretary of State will help reverse the foreign policy blunders and will be critical in advancing President Trump’s America-first agenda.

On behalf of parents across the country who want a school free of hate and a secure country, we urge you to expedite Sen. Rubio’s nomination to serve as America’s next Secretary of State.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michele Exner', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michele Exner  
Director of Federal Affairs  
Parents Defending Education Action

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<sup>3</sup> Parents Defending Education Poll: Foreign Funding in K-12 Schools. Parents Defending Education. July 25, 2023. <https://defendinged.org/press-releases/parents-defending-education-poll-87-of-voters-agree-that-schools-should-be-required-to-disclose-when-they-accept-money-from-foreign-governments/>

<sup>4</sup> “Antisemitism on College Campuses Exposed.” Committee on Education and the Workforce, U.S. House of Representatives. October 31, 2024. [https://edworkforce.house.gov/uploadedfiles/10.30.24\\_committee\\_on\\_education\\_and\\_the\\_workforce\\_republican\\_staff\\_report\\_-\\_antisemitism\\_on\\_college\\_campuses\\_exposed.pdf](https://edworkforce.house.gov/uploadedfiles/10.30.24_committee_on_education_and_the_workforce_republican_staff_report_-_antisemitism_on_college_campuses_exposed.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Daily Kickoff. Jewish Insider. December 20, 2024. <https://jewishinsider.com/2024/12/daily-kickoff-inside-trumps-mar-a-lago-majlis/>