

Opening Statement of Senator Tom Carper
“Securing the U.S. Research Enterprise from China’s Talent Recruitment Plans”
November 19, 2019

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

During the two terms I was privileged to serve as Governor of Delaware, more jobs were created in our state than any other eight-year period in Delaware history. I did not create one of them. Working with our state legislature and many stakeholders throughout Delaware and beyond our borders, we sought to create a nurturing environment for job creation and job preservation.

Among the elements of that nurturing environment are a well-educated workforce, an affordable tax burden, commonsense regulations, public safety, access to capital, transportation infrastructure, quality health care at reasonable prices, the ability to export goods and services, clean air and water, open space, beautiful beaches, cybersecurity, investments in R&D that can be commercialized, protection of intellectual property, access to decision makers, and the list goes on.

To this day, my team here in DC and in Delaware and I continue to work every day with many partners to improve that nurturing environment.

Those of us serving in Congress and the administration play a key role in ensuring our country continues to be a place where businesses can thrive and create jobs.

A big part of our job when it comes to economic competitiveness involves helping the United States to remain on the cutting edge when it comes to science and research. We invest a significant amount of taxpayer money in doing that. The agencies represented before us today spend \$44 billion each year to fund research at colleges and universities and other institutions across this country. These investments have led to major innovations.

For example, a National Science Foundation grant supported a Stanford University project that eventually led to the founding of Google, one of the most successful companies in the world.

And NIH and Department of Energy grants were critical to the success of the Human Genome Project, an historic undertaking that will deliver medical and economic benefits for years to come.

As the report we issued today points out, though, the Chinese government has for more than a decade sought to boost its own research and innovation capabilities by exploiting investments that America has made and is making. They’ve recruited thousands of experts from a wide range of fields to transfer intellectual property developed here in the United States to China in order to benefit Chinese researchers, Chinese businesses, and ultimately, in many cases, the Chinese military.

A number of American researchers who’ve been drawn into this effort even sign contracts with their Chinese employers. In at least some cases, these contracts give China ownership of

technologies and innovations that Americans discover and develop. Some of those contracts even require that information about the researchers' Chinese ties be kept from their American employers and the federal agencies that fund their work.

Our report contains examples of contracts that researchers working with the Chinese government must sign, along with case studies detailing the steps that some American researchers have taken to aid China while hiding their activities from our government.

I hope that the publication of this information will inspire a serious and urgent conversation on university campuses and among scientists and researchers about the growing threat that China's talent recruitment efforts pose for our country. I hope it also leads to an appreciation of the consequences that come from giving a foreign government so much access to and control over the vital research we rely on to fuel our economic competitiveness and bolster our national defense.

Having said that, we should not be stepping back from international collaboration in science and technology. As China's aggressive efforts show, our scientists, research institutions, and universities remain the best in the world and serve as a magnet for talented people looking to do meaningful, cutting edge work. We need to keep investing in that work while doing more to keep scientists, their innovations, and the jobs that flow from those innovations here in our country.

But we also need to be smart and take the steps necessary to ensure that conflicts of interest are disclosed and those who might be looking to cheat and steal to get ahead no longer receive federal research dollars.

I was pleased to hear in preparing for this hearing about some of the steps agencies have begun taking to better manage and secure federal research programs. For example, agencies have reached out to universities and research institutions across the country to raise awareness about this threat and to emphasize the importance of fully reporting foreign collaborators. Some have also implemented policies prohibiting employees from participating in foreign talent recruitment plans.

These are good first steps but we need to do more. Due to our lax oversight of federal research grants and the ineffective and mixed messages agencies have been delivering to schools and researchers on this topic over the years, we've given the Chinese and likely other countries a running start. We can't continue to allow this to happen!

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about how we can further improve our efforts to deny our competitors and adversaries the opportunity to continue to reap economic and military gains at our expense in the future.

My thanks again, Mr. Chairman, for your leadership on this issue and for the work you and your staff, along with my own staff, have put into this hearing and our report.