

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 710

To direct the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct a study to evaluate the activities of sister city partnerships operating within the United States, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 11, 2021

Mrs. BLACKBURN (for herself, Mr. HAWLEY, Mr. CRAMER, Mr. TILLIS, Mr. RUBIO, and Mr. MARSHALL) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

A BILL

To direct the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct a study to evaluate the activities of sister city partnerships operating within the United States, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Sister City Trans-
5 parency Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

7 In this Act:

1 (1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMIT-
2 TEES.—The term “appropriate congressional com-
3 mittees” means—

4 (A) the Committee on Foreign Relations of
5 the Senate;

6 (B) the Committee on Health, Education,
7 Labor, and Pensions of the Senate;

8 (C) the Committee on Armed Services of
9 the Senate;

10 (D) the Committee on Foreign Affairs of
11 the House of Representatives;

12 (E) the Committee on Education and
13 Labor of the House of Representatives; and

14 (F) the Committee on Armed Services of
15 the House of Representatives.

16 (2) FOREIGN COMMUNITY.—The term “foreign
17 community” means any subnational unit of govern-
18 ment outside of the United States.

19 (3) SISTER CITY PARTNERSHIP.—The term
20 “sister city partnership” means a formal agreement
21 between a United States community and a foreign
22 community that—

23 (A) is recognized by Sister Cities Inter-
24 national; and

25 (B) is operating within the United States.

1 (4) UNITED STATES COMMUNITY.—The term
 2 “United States community” means a State, county,
 3 city, or other unit of local government in the United
 4 States.

5 **SEC. 3. STUDY OF SISTER CITY PARTNERSHIPS OPERATING**
 6 **WITHIN THE UNITED STATES INVOLVING**
 7 **FOREIGN COMMUNITIES IN COUNTRIES WITH**
 8 **SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC SECTOR CORRUPTION.**

9 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Comptroller General of the
 10 United States shall conduct a study of the activities of
 11 sister city partnerships involving foreign communities in
 12 countries receiving a score of 45 or less on Transparency
 13 International’s 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index.

14 (b) ELEMENTS OF THE STUDY.—The study con-
 15 ducted under subsection (a) shall—

16 (1) identify—

17 (A) the criteria by which foreign commu-
 18 nities identify United States communities as
 19 candidates for sister city partnerships, including
 20 themes with respect to the prominent economic
 21 activities and demographics of such United
 22 States communities;

23 (B) the activities conducted within sister
 24 city partnerships;

1 (C) the economic and educational outcomes
2 of such activities;

3 (D) the types of information that sister
4 city partnerships make publicly available, in-
5 cluding information relating to contracts and
6 activities;

7 (E) the means by which United States
8 communities safeguard freedom of expression
9 within sister city partnerships; and

10 (F) the oversight practices that United
11 States communities implement to mitigate the
12 risks of foreign espionage and economic coer-
13 cion within sister city partnerships;

14 (2) assess—

15 (A) the extent to which United States com-
16 munities ensure transparency regarding sister
17 city partnership contracts and activities;

18 (B) the extent to which sister city partner-
19 ships involve economic arrangements that make
20 United States communities vulnerable to malign
21 market practices;

22 (C) the extent to which sister city partner-
23 ships involve educational arrangements that di-
24 minish the freedom of expression;

1 (D) the extent to which sister city partner-
2 ships allow foreign nationals to access local
3 commercial, educational, and political institu-
4 tions;

5 (E) the extent to which foreign commu-
6 nities could use sister city partnerships to real-
7 ize strategic objectives that do not conduce to
8 the economic and national security interests of
9 the United States;

10 (F) the extent to which sister city partner-
11 ships could enable or otherwise contribute to
12 foreign communities' malign activities globally,
13 including activities relating to human rights
14 abuses and academic and industrial espionage;
15 and

16 (G) the extent to which United States com-
17 munities seek to mitigate foreign nationals' po-
18 tentially inappropriate use of visa programs to
19 participate in activities relating to sister city
20 partnerships; and

21 (3) review—

22 (A) the range of activities conducted within
23 sister city partnerships, including activities re-
24 lating to cultural exchange and economic devel-
25 opment;

1 (B) how such activities differ between sis-
2 ter city partnerships; and

3 (C) best practices to ensure transparency
4 regarding sister city partnerships' agreements,
5 activities, and employees.

6 (c) REPORT.—

7 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 6 months
8 after initiating the study required under subsection
9 (a), the Comptroller General shall submit a report to
10 the appropriate congressional committees that con-
11 tains the results of such study, including the find-
12 ings, conclusions, and recommendations (if any) of
13 the study.

14 (2) FORM.—The report required under para-
15 graph (1) may include a classified annex, if nec-
16 essary.

○