

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. _____

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

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

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 activities conducted within sister
18 city partnerships;

19 (B) the economic and educational out-
20 comes of such activities;

21 (C) the types of information that sister
22 city partnerships make publicly available, in-
23 cluding information relating to contracts and
24 activities;

1 (D) the means by which United States
2 communities safeguard freedom of expression
3 within sister city partnerships; and

4 (E) the oversight practices that United
5 States communities implement to mitigate the
6 risks of foreign espionage and economic coer-
7 cion within sister city partnerships;

8 (2) assess—

9 (A) the extent to which United States com-
10 munities ensure transparency regarding sister
11 city partnership contracts and activities;

12 (B) the extent to which sister city partner-
13 ships involve economic arrangements that make
14 United States communities vulnerable to malign
15 market practices;

16 (C) the extent to which sister city partner-
17 ships involve educational arrangements that di-
18 minish the freedom of expression;

19 (D) the extent to which sister city partner-
20 ships allow foreign nationals to access local
21 commercial, educational, and political institu-
22 tions;

23 (E) the extent to which foreign commu-
24 nities could use sister city partnerships to real-
25 ize strategic objectives which do not conduce to

1 the economic and national security interests of
2 the United States;

3 (F) the extent to which foreign commu-
4 nities could use sister city partnerships to con-
5 duct malign activities, including academic and
6 industrial espionage; and

7 (G) the extent to which United States com-
8 munities seek to mitigate foreign nationals' po-
9 tentially inappropriate use of visa programs to
10 participate in activities relating to sister city
11 partnerships; and

12 (3) review—

13 (A) the range of activities conducted within
14 sister city partnerships, including activities re-
15 lating to cultural exchange and economic devel-
16 opment;

17 (B) how such activities differ between sis-
18 ter city partnerships; and

19 (C) best practices to ensure transparency
20 regarding sister city partnerships' agreements,
21 activities, and employees.

22 (c) REPORT.—

23 (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 6 months
24 after initiating the study required under subsection
25 (a), the Comptroller General shall submit a report to

1 the appropriate congressional committees that con-
2 tains the results of such study, including the find-
3 ings, conclusions, and recommendations (if any) of
4 the study.

5 (2) FORM.—The report required under para-
6 graph (1) may include a classified annex, if nec-
7 essary.