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,
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4 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.  
5 This Act may be cited as the “Sister City Trans-
6 parency Act”.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.  
7 In this Act:
(1) Appropriate congressional committees.—The term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

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

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

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

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

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

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

(2) Foreign community.—The term “foreign community” means any subnational unit of government outside of the United States.

(3) Sister city partnership.—The term “sister city partnership” means a formal agreement between a United States community and a foreign community that—

(A) is recognized by Sister Cities International; and

(B) is operating within the United States.
(4) United States community.—The term “United States community” means a State, county, city, or other unit of local government in the United States.

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

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

(b) Elements of the Study.—The study conducted under subsection (a) shall—

(1) identify—

(A) the activities conducted within sister city partnerships;

(B) the economic and educational outcomes of such activities;

(C) the types of information that sister city partnerships make publicly available, including information relating to contracts and activities;
(D) the means by which United States communities safeguard freedom of expression within sister city partnerships; and

(E) the oversight practices that United States communities implement to mitigate the risks of foreign espionage and economic coercion within sister city partnerships;

(2) assess—

(A) the extent to which United States communities ensure transparency regarding sister city partnership contracts and activities;

(B) the extent to which sister city partnerships involve economic arrangements that make United States communities vulnerable to malign market practices;

(C) the extent to which sister city partnerships involve educational arrangements that diminish the freedom of expression;

(D) the extent to which sister city partnerships allow foreign nationals to access local commercial, educational, and political institutions;

(E) the extent to which foreign communities could use sister city partnerships to realize strategic objectives which do not conduce to
the economic and national security interests of
the United States;

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

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

(3) review—

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

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

(C) best practices to ensure transparency
regarding sister city partnerships’ agreements,
activities, and employees.

(c) Report.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 6 months
after initiating the study required under subsection
(a), the Comptroller General shall submit a report to
the appropriate congressional committees that contains the results of such study, including the findings, conclusions, and recommendations (if any) of the study.

(2) FORM.—The report required under paragraph (1) may include a classified annex, if necessary.