



TESTIMONY

ENACT OHIO PROPERTY PROTECTION ACT

House Bill 1

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TESTIMONY BEFORE

OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
House Public Safety Committee

TESTIMONY BY

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Good afternoon, Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Miller, Ranking Member Thomas, and the Public Safety Committee. Thank you very much for allowing me to testify today.

My name is Adam Savit, and I am the director of the China Policy Initiative at America First Policy Institute (AFPI).

At AFPI, we believe that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) poses a comprehensive threat to U.S. national security. The path to American success lies in our own economic prosperity, secure supply chains, energy independence, and military deterrence to neutralize this threat while avoiding war. As a guiding principle, America First policy begins with reciprocity—the CCP and anyone tied to it should have no access to any institution or opportunity in America beyond that to which we have access in China. Chief among these is access to property.

These same values inspired state legislators to introduce a wave of bills in the 2023 and 2024 state sessions to prevent the CCP and other adversaries from acquiring agricultural land.

The CCP agricultural footprint in the United States is significant. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reports that Chinese investors' holdings of U.S. agricultural land surged from 13,720 acres in 2010 to 352,140 acres in 2020—a stunning 2,400 percent increase in that timeframe. While conclusive numbers are hard to come by because of purposely opaque ownership structures put in place by our adversaries, the best and most recent numbers from the USDA show the following. At the end of 2023, PRC nationals, companies, or joint ventures in the U.S. owned 277,336 acres. When one combines this number with acreage owned by Hong Kong nationals and joint ventures, that number reaches as high as 421,423 acres.

Of that acreage in 2023, at *least* 334 agricultural acres in Ohio were owned directly by either wholly-Chinese-controlled companies or solely Chinese nationals¹.

Ohio made great strides in protecting its citizens in 2023 when a legislative package was passed with restrictions on foreign adversaries owning agricultural land. These actions are consistent with AFPI's Farmers First Agenda, which encourages policies that protect and defend U.S. farmland from the control of foreign adversaries.

But the threat goes well beyond agricultural land. The crucial question is one of any real property close enough to national security sites, military bases, and critical infrastructure to serve as a launching pad for surveillance and sabotage. Unfortunately, a line item veto on the 2023 Ohio legislation left Ohioans vulnerable by failing to include real property and proximity provisions.

¹ The AFIDA annual report, from which this data is pulled from, lists only the specific counties and companies which are wholly PRC-owned, and excludes both Hong Kong-owned and US/China joint ventures from the Report 11 section which has these details.



Ideally the federal government, through its interagency Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS) should be protecting these facilities, but in recent years they have had high profile and dangerous failures.

For example, in 2022, CCP food manufacturer FuFeng Group bought land near Grand Forks Air Force Base in North Dakota—a facility CFIUS failed to include in existing federal regulations as a designated military installation and a transaction over which the CFIUS claimed it had no jurisdiction. Media exposure and local pressure defeated the proposed development, but CFIUS' unwillingness or inability to act exposed a major gap in land security.

In April 2024, the Biden administration's CFIUS rightfully received credit for ordering the divestment of a company with Chinese majority ownership from land only one mile from an ICBM missile silo in Wyoming. However, this was less of a victory than it seems. First, this property was purchased in June 2022, and so had been operating for nearly two years, presumably without restriction. Second, authorities were only alerted to the transaction after a tipoff from a member of the public. Furthermore, if we are only recently hearing about this most flagrant violation of investment restrictions, it's reasonable to assume that CFIUS has missed many such cases that are less clear.

And so, as in many cases when federal safeguards fail in their duty to protect American citizens, it fell to the states, our 50 creative laboratories of democracy, to find a solution.

That is why HB1, the Enact Ohio Property Protection Act, is vital not only to maintain the security of Ohioans but also to serve as an example for states that have yet to tackle this problem. It could eventually help to provide a solution for the entire nation.

This bill directly targets foreign adversary countries as determined in Ohio by the secretary of state, as well as citizens and businesses of those countries and their agents or trustees. This bill would not target American citizens of any background or their businesses.

HB1 clearly designates “protected property” as real property located within 25 miles of installations under the jurisdiction of the armed forces or a critical infrastructure facility. “Critical infrastructure” includes power stations, chemical facilities, water treatment facilities, gas pipelines, ports, dams, and other sites comprehensively defined in Ohio code.

The 25-mile proximity provision is crucial to deny CCP agents the ability to sabotage or surveil these protected properties, and to enforce the law effectively. Enforcement is housed at the county level, and 25 miles ensures that the radius around any foreign adversary-owned property would encompass the approximate size of an Ohio county.

Recently Indiana signed a 10-mile proximity ban around its military installations, and the governor of Missouri enacted an executive order with the same 10-mile feature.



While these efforts are praiseworthy, 10 miles leaves too much of the state vulnerable and does not pass the “county-sized” test.

I strongly encourage you to support HB 1. We must provide effective protection for Ohio communities before a serious and completely preventable incident takes place.

