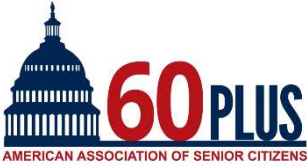




November 17th, 2023



Dear Senators and Members of Congress,

We write in support of a provision included in the House-passed *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024* (NDAA) that would prohibit the U.S. government from contracting with biotechnology providers under the control of the People’s Republic of China, their military, or other foreign adversaries. This prohibition, which was included as an amendment to the NDAA by Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-WI) and introduced in the Senate by Sen. Bill Hagerty (R-TN), would establish necessary safeguards to ensure that Americans’ genomic information is protected from potentially malign actors seeking to amass and leverage this sensitive personal information to achieve economic and national security goals.



U.S. leadership in the area of biotechnology and genomic data is critical. The power of the genome is only just now beginning to be fully understood, with its applications for population level healthcare, targeted therapies for oncology and other conditions, agriculture, and biodefense growing each day. Genomic data is important on an individual level, where it is among the most personal data a person has, and on a population level, where it can provide information on an entire race, or sub-race of individuals in a way that can explain why populations are susceptible to certain viruses and respond to certain environmental factors. In the wrong hands, genomic data can also be used for genetic surveillance or societal control of minority populations.

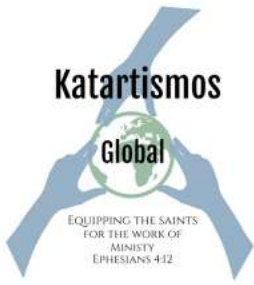


Given the important economic and national security implications of leadership in biotechnology and genomic data, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has prioritized it for state support, including in its Made in China 2025 Plan. Further, there is ample evidence that the CCP and its biotechnology national champions like Beijing Genomics Institute (BGI) and WuXi are engaged in a systematic campaign to collect as much personal genomic data as possible to achieve the Party’s objectives. As recently reported by the Washington Post, China has been engaged in a genomic data collection effort for the past decade, “with a vast and growing government-owned repository that now includes genetic data drawn from millions of people around the world.” These efforts received a major boost from the COVID-19 pandemic when Chinese companies and institutes provided free or low-cost COVID-19 testing kits, laboratories, or gene-sequencing machines around the world to facilitate their efforts.



The U.S. Government has long recognized the threat posed by BGI and other Chinese biotechnology champions. The Department of Commerce first placed BGI-controlled companies on the entity list under the Trump Administration in 2020 because they were “conducting genetic analyses used to further the repression of Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in the [Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region].” The Biden Administration reaffirmed this position earlier this year,





adding more BGI affiliates to the entity list for posing a significant risk of contribution to Chinese government surveillance and risk of diversion to China’s military programs. The Department of Defense has also taken aim at BGI, naming in its Section 1260H List of Chinese military companies, noting that such companies support the “modernization goals of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) by ensuring its access to advanced technologies and expertise are acquired and developed by PRC companies, universities, and research programs that appear to be civilian entities.”



The NDAA provision supported by Representative Gallagher and Senator Hagerty takes an important step to protect American biotechnology by prohibiting the U.S. government and those that contract with the U.S. government from acquiring genetic sequencing equipment from Beijing Genomics Institute (BGI) and its subsidiaries. This is critical to thwart China’s broad data collection efforts, which threaten U.S. economic and national security leadership.

For these reasons, we strongly urge the Conference Committee to include Rep. Gallagher and Sen. Hagerty’s language to the final NDAA text as you head to conference.



Sincerely,

Saul Anuzis
60 Plus

Darren Spinck
Henry Jackson Society



Richard Walker
Benjamin Rush

Faith McDonnell
Katartismos Global

Heather Higgins
Independent Women’s Voice

Seton Motley
Less Government

Ryan Walker
Heritage Action

Craig Shirley
Citizens for the Republic

George Landrith
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Terry Schilling
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Richard Manning
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