

November 8, 2025

The Honorable Tim Walberg
Chairman
House Committee on Education and the Workforce
2266 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Walberg,

As a former U.S. Secretary of Education, I remain deeply interested in the success and improvement of our academic institutions, which have a global reputation for excellence.

In the recent past, this reputation has been the subject of new controversy and debate. I have watched closely in the past year as Senate and House committees have undertaken a fresh look at the leadership and culture of our universities, revealing in some cases persistent problems that require attention.

I recently agreed to serve as an education advisor to the State of Qatar, a small country in the Arabian Gulf that has made an extraordinary investment in educating its population. For example, 25 years ago, Qatar established partnerships with six prestigious American universities to establish branch campuses in Doha, where they provide degree programs to Qatari women and men, and to others who wish to study there. These universities operate in Qatar with complete academic independence, offering the same curricula delivered at their home campuses in the United States. The operating costs, which are substantial, are paid entirely by Qatar.

Since their inception, countless degrees have been awarded to a new generation in the Middle East, now trained and proudly credentialed as medical doctors from Cornell, engineers from Texas A&M, computer scientists from Carnegie Mellon, journalists from Northwestern, diplomats from Georgetown, and more. Most of the graduates are women, thus enriching the quality of the workforce in a region not known for creating such opportunities.

Incredibly, Qatar's decision to bring the best of American education to its population is not always celebrated here in the United States. Instead, this investment has invited attacks and conspiracy theories about "malign foreign influence" at our universities.

We absolutely should be worried and vigilant about foreign influence in U.S. education. But based on my information, and the publicly disclosed findings of the U.S. intelligence community, Qatar is not engaged in an influence campaign at U.S. universities. If anything, the opposite is true. In their quarter century in Qatar, our American universities have shaped the thinking of a new generation in the center of the Middle East. No influence campaign could be more profound than that. It is no exaggeration to say that this contributed significantly to Qatar's central role as an American ally and security partner in the Gulf, and the essential interlocutor in the recent successful negotiations to release the hostages and bring peace to Gaza.

I encourage your committees to continue, and indeed, renew their investigations of foreign influence in U.S. universities. Qatar welcomes this because it has nothing to hide. Inquiries should be rigorous and evidence-based. Witnesses must be transparent about their funding sources, and about their own connections to foreign entities. When accusations of foreign influence are made, they must be tested against well-established statistical and scientific standards to distinguish between what is real and what is propaganda. Malign foreign influence must be exposed, but honesty is crucial.

In this country, we have always supported the sharing of American values with others. Historically, education has been among our most successful exports, and a powerful means of showing the world what we stand for. I urge you to use your leadership to preserve that tradition where it has been successful in places like Qatar, while diligently monitoring evidence that other foreign actors may have malicious intentions. Congress should be a leader in investigating foreign influence in U.S. education, and in this process, it should set the highest standards for transparency and evidentiary rigor.

Sincerely,



William J. Bennett
Former Secretary of Education

CC: The Honorable Mary Miller, Vice Chair, House Committee on Education & the Workforce
The Honorable Rick Allen, Member, House Committee on Education & the Workforce
The Honorable Michael Baumgartner, Member, House Committee on Education & the Workforce
The Honorable James Comer, Member, House Committee on Education & the Workforce
The Honorable Randy Fine, Member, House Committee on Education & the Workforce
The Honorable Virginia Foxx, Member, House Committee on Education & the Workforce
The Honorable Glenn Grothman, Member, House Committee on Education & the Workforce
The Honorable Mark Harris, Member, House Committee on Education & the Workforce
The Honorable Erin Houchin, Member, House Committee on Education & the Workforce
The Honorable Kevin Kiley, Member, House Committee on Education & the Workforce
The Honorable Julia Letlow, Member, House Committee on Education & the Workforce
The Honorable Ryan Mackenzie, Member, House Committee on Education & the Workforce
The Honorable Lisa McClain, Member, House Committee on Education & the Workforce

The Honorable Mark Messmer, Member, House Committee on Education & the Workforce

The Honorable James "Jim" Moylan, Member, House Committee on Education & the Workforce

The Honorable Bob Onder, Member, House Committee on Education & the Workforce

The Honorable Burgess Owens, Member, House Committee on Education & the Workforce

The Honorable Michael Rulli, Member, House Committee on Education & the Workforce

The Honorable Elise Stefanik, Member, House Committee on Education & the Workforce

The Honorable Glenn "G.T." Thompson, Member, House Committee on Education & the Workforce

The Honorable Joe Wilson, Member, House Committee on Education & the Workforce