

Testimony of the Honorable Raja Krishnamoorthi (IL-08)
The House Committee on Agriculture
March 18, 2024

Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Scott, Members of the Committee, thank you for the invitation and the opportunity to speak today. Congressman Johnson, Congresswoman Brown, it's great to see you from this side of the dais.

Agriculture is and has historically been a cornerstone of the U.S.-China relationship, and Chairman Gallagher and I have worked closely with our members on the Ag. Committee on this important issue. In August 2023, the Chairman and I traveled to Dysart, a small town in Iowa.

In 2011, not very far from Dysart, a farmer saw a man digging in the cornfields. After some investigation, authorities discovered that this man was not just digging for fun. He was looking for proprietary corn seeds to send back to his employer, a Chinese corn seed company.¹ The man eventually tried to ship 250 pounds of corn seeds to Hong Kong disguised in Costco-sized packs of microwave popcorn. The total cost of this *one case* of IP theft was estimated to be \$30 million dollars.

Agricultural technology is a prime target of intellectual property theft because American technology and farming are the best and most productive in the world. The Select Committee's bipartisan Economic Report, released in December last year, included broad recommendations on how to best protect our intellectual property. For the ag. sector, we need to continue to improve coordination between local and federal law enforcement agencies, and properly resource and train the Department of Justice to prosecute these crimes.

There are other ag.-related concerns addressed in our Economic Report. Congresswomen Brown and Slotkin, along with Congresswoman Hinson, have already transformed another Econ Report recommendation into the Securing American Agriculture Act, which will require the USDA to study the supply chains of our agricultural inputs, including vitamins, animal feed, and pesticides, where the PRC has been increasingly dominating the market and crowding out American and other suppliers. As we continue to remain in an era of uncertainty in our trade relationship with the PRC, we also need to better protect American farmers from retaliation by the CCP, including by diversifying American agricultural exports to different markets.

Chairman Gallagher has spoken about the issue of land sales. There are legitimate concerns with a few land purchases by PRC entities close to sensitive and military sites. However, as we address these problems, we have to make sure that the cure is not worse than the disease. Some purported solutions have had very real and harmful effects on the Asian American

¹ Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Protecting Vital Assets: Pilfering of Corn Seeds Illustrates Intellectual Property Theft," December 19, 2016, <https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/sentencing-in-corn-seed-intellectual-property-theft-case>.

community as well. Dozens of bills, for instance, target Chinese nationals regardless of their connection to the CCP and regardless of their proximity to sensitive sites.

Florida, for example, passed SB264, a law that prohibits individuals who are “domiciled” in the PRC and are not U.S. citizens or green card holders from purchasing buildings or land in the state. This law had a profound impact on the Asian American community, and families that are trying to build lives suddenly found themselves in an impossible position. Take the case of Zhiming Xu, a political asylee living in Florida who was persecuted by the PRC government. He had fled the U.S. earlier and was beginning to rebuild his life in United States. Since the passage of SB264, Mr. Xu was forced to cancel the contract for the purchase of what was supposed to be his new home. Both his property and his \$30,000 deposit were in jeopardy.² The lesson here is clear: when land purchase bills target individuals who are Chinese immigrants, they often target those outside their intended audience.

The Asian American Legal Defense and Education fund filed an injunction against the Florida law on equal protection grounds. Laws like SB264 are neither fair nor justified. In the early 20th century, states passed similar “alien land laws” in more than a dozen other states, prohibiting Chinese and Japanese immigrants from becoming landowners. These racist policies severely restricted economic opportunities and exacerbated discrimination against Asian communities in the United States, before eventually being overturned one by one. We must be clear that we do not stand for laws that discriminate based on ethnicity and nationality.

Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Scott, thank you again for this opportunity to testify today. The Select Committee looks forward to working with your Committee in the future.

² Carroll, Michael, “Florida Record: Appeals court blocks Florida from enforcing property restrictions against 2 Chinese citizens,” February 26, 2024, <https://www.aaldef.org/news/florida-record-appeals-court-blocks-florida-from-enforcing-property-restrictions-against-2/>.