



One Hundred Eighteenth Congress
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

January 12, 2024

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

The Honorable Anne Milgram
Administrator
Drug Enforcement Administration
U.S. Department of Justice
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Secretary Mayorkas and Administrator Milgram:

The Committee on Homeland Security (Committee) is growing increasingly alarmed by the number of illicit Chinese-operated marijuana farms that have been seized by local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies across the United States. Many of these illicit grow operations work in conjunction with transnational criminal organizations.

Illicit Chinese-operated marijuana farms have been found across the country and pose significant risks to our nation's security.¹ First, illicit marijuana farms provide unregulated access for consumers to Schedule 1 substances and help provide additional revenue sources to transnational criminal organizations.² Many of these operations have also been found to have labor conditions that are emblematic of human trafficking³ and forced labor practices.⁴ In addition, Chinese investors have financed some of these illegal operations, and these investments include cash payment for large swaths of land to conduct these operations.⁵ Members of Congress have routinely raised their concerns with real estate purchases made by entities

¹ Natalie Fertig, *The Growing Chinese Investments in Illegal American Weed*, POLITICO (March 21, 2023), available at <https://www.politico.com/news/2023/03/21/illicit-cannabis-china-00086125>.

² Press Release, Office of Oklahoma Attorney General Gentner Drummond, *Attorney General's Organized Crime Task Force seizes more than 77,000 illegal marijuana plants* (Nov 17, 2023), available at <https://www.oag.ok.gov/articles/attorney-generals-organized-crime-task-force-seizes-more-77000-illegal-marijuana-plants>.

³ Jacob Soboroff et al., *Raids on Black Market Cannabis Farms Uncover Human Trafficking Victims*, NBC News (Sept. 8, 2022), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/raids-black-market-cannabis-farms-uncover-human-trafficking-victims-rcna46787>.

⁴ Susan Montoya Bryan & Rio Yamat, *Chinese Immigrant Workers Sue Over Forced Labor at Illegal Marijuana Operation on Navajo Land*, AP NEWS (Sept. 27, 2023), available at <https://apnews.com/article/navajo-marijuana-farms-chinese-workers-trafficking-lawsuit-4b2387e2bb6d9645bf2e8c81482281>.

⁵ *Id* at 1.

Secretary Mayorkas
Administrator Milgram
January 12, 2024
Page 2

domiciled in the People's Republic of China (PRC).⁶ Lastly, illegal grow operations have been directly linked to spikes in violent crime in local communities.⁷

To assist the Committee's examination of illicit PRC activity in the U.S. homeland, we request that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) provide Committee staff with a briefing as soon as possible, but no later than January 25, 2024. This briefing should include, but not be limited to, information about the actions your agencies are conducting to monitor, investigate, and dismantle illicit Chinese-operated marijuana farms, as well as information about the links these illegal farms have to transnational criminal organizations and foreign entities.

Please contact the Committee on Homeland Security Majority staff at (202) 226-8417 with any questions about this request.

Per House Rule X, the Committee on Homeland Security is the principal Committee of jurisdiction for overall homeland security policy and has special oversight functions of "all Government activities relating to homeland security, including the interaction of all departments and agencies with the Department of Homeland Security."

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



MARK E. GREEN, M.D.
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security



AUGUST PFLUGER
Chairman
Subcommittee on Counterterrorism,
Law Enforcement, and Intelligence

⁶ Press Release, *Senator Kevin Cramer, Sen. Cramer Discusses National Security Concerns Regarding Fufeng Farmland Purchase Near Grand Forks Air Force Base on America Reports* (July 22, 2022), available at <https://www.cramer.senate.gov/news/press-releases/sen-cramer-discusses-national-security-concerns-regarding-fufeng-farmland-purchase-near-grand-forks-air-force-base-on-america-reports>; see also, Courtney Kube, *Democrat, Republican Team Up to Limit Chinese Purchase of U.S. Farmland*, NBC NEWS (June 20, 2023), available at <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/democrat-republican-team-limit-chinese-purchase-us-farmland-rcna90082>.

⁷ Press Release, *Los Angeles County Sherriff's Department, Sheriff Alex Villanueva Announces Crack Down On Illegal Marijuana Operations* (June 8, 2021), available at <https://lasd.org/sheriff-alex-villanueva-announces-crack-down-on-illegal-marijuana-operations/>.

Secretary Mayorkas
Administrator Milgram
January 12, 2024
Page 3

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Clay Higgins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

CLAY HIGGINS
Chairman
Subcommittee on Border Security and Enforcement

Encl.

cc: The Honorable Bennie Thompson, Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Seth Magaziner, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Counterterrorism, Law Enforcement, and Intelligence

The Honorable Lou Correa, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Border Security and Enforcement