

Statement of Chairman Sherrod Brown
May 31, 2023

I call this hearing to order.

For far too long, our policy around China catered to multinational corporations, and failed working families. It devastated local communities and it eroded our manufacturing base and national competitiveness.

This shouldn't be news to anyone. It's why 23 years ago, Lindsey Graham and I opposed permanent normal trade relations with China.

We knew that corporations would shut down production in Ohio and South Carolina and across the country, and move production to China in search of lower and lower wages.

That's exactly what happened.

Since NAFTA's enactment in 1994 and China's entry into the WTO, Ohio has lost over 276,000 manufacturing jobs.

That's over a quarter of a million Ohioans who once had a good paying job – often with the top-notch benefits that comes with a union card – suddenly finding themselves out of a job. It often takes a decade or more for families and communities to recover from that kind of loss.

It devastated industrial communities in Ohio and around the country.

And it helped build up the Chinese military.

Today, after years of misguided China policy, we are finally starting to do something about it.

We passed landmark legislation that rebuilds our infrastructure and invests in critical technologies – like semiconductors and advanced energy – that will build more secure supply chains.

And Ohio will be at the center of that kind of investment. Finally, we have buried the term “rust belt.” Now, we’re making more in America.

We need to safeguard critical technologies from the PRC’s military and security apparatus, using national security measures. It’s why we’re holding this hearing.

For years, this Committee has worked on a bipartisan basis to establish legal authorities to protect our national security from risks posed by the Chinese Communist Party.

Five years ago, I worked with then-Chairman Mike Crapo to pass the Export Control Reform Act and the Foreign Investment Risk Review and Modernization Act.

We strengthened our export control system and inbound investment screening authorities.

Just last month we did it again. Ranking Member Scott and I worked with a majority of this committee to introduce the FEND

Off Fentanyl Act. We have nearly all of the committee members, and almost half the Senate, as cosponsors.

In 2021, fentanyl was involved in 80% of Ohio's unintentional drug overdose deaths. I hear over and over from Ohioans that we need new, more powerful tools to prevent the flow of fentanyl into our communities.

Our bill declares that international Fentanyl trafficking is a national emergency – an emergency that is destroying lives and families across America and that poses an extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States.

Therefore, the bill uses our economic arsenal to target every step of the foreign supply chain – from Chinese chemical suppliers, to Mexican cartels, to money launderers profiting off the illicit drug trade.

National security threats evolve – whether from regimes in Tehran, Pyongyang, Moscow, Beijing, or non-state actors or human rights abuses, IP theft, or illicit fentanyl trade. We must ensure that our tools evolve along with them.

To that end, I look forward to hearing perspectives from the witnesses on a range of bipartisan legislative proposals and ideas. For example:

Senators Casey and Cornyn are working on legislation that would address a gap in our existing national security authorities – risks posed by certain outbound U.S. investments.

Senators Tester and Rounds have legislation to address concerns related to Chinese ownership of U.S. farmland and agricultural businesses.

Senators Wyden and Lummis have a proposal that would impose export controls on personal data.

And Senators Warner and Thune have legislation to address concerns related to information and communications technology transactions.

The Committee will examine a range of other proposals to address challenges posed by China – related to Taiwan, technology development, digital assets, export controls, and other issues.

We all agree that China is a real and growing threat. Our committee must play a leadership role in countering that threat. Today's hearing is another important step, as we work together to safeguard our national security.

Ranking Member Scott.