



**Statement of U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown
Chairman, Congressional-Executive
Commission on China (CECC)**

**CECC Hearing on “Food and Drug Safety,
Public Health, and the Environment in China”**

May 22, 2013

Thank you for attending this timely hearing. I'd like to thank the distinguished panelists for being here to help raise awareness about this important topic.

I'd also like to welcome the newest members of the Commission, Congressman Frank Wolf, Congressman Robert Pittenger, and Congressman Mark Meadows, and hope that the remaining appointments to the Commission will be made soon.

In recent months, the world has once again been reminded just how closely our health and safety is tied to China.

The current bird flu outbreak has claimed 36 lives and has spread to Taiwan.

The discovery of 20,000 dead pigs floating in Shanghai and rat meat being passed off as lamb have renewed concerns about the safety of China's food exports.

Pollution in Beijing and other cities has reached intolerable levels.

And this spring marks the height of the SARS crisis ten years ago, which took 774 lives and touched nearly every corner of the globe.

The risk to Americans has increased since we expanded trade relations with China without both providing for mechanisms to ensure safe imports, and without properly equipping our safety agencies with tools to ensure safe food.

In 2001, when China entered the World Trade Organization, the total amount of Chinese goods exported to the United States was \$102 billion. In 2012, that number had reached a staggering \$426 billion.

From 2001 to 2012, China's food exports to the United States reportedly tripled.

Between 2003 and 2011 the volume of pet food exports from China to the United States grew 85-fold.

Americans today might be surprised to learn just how much of their food and drugs are made in China. Some 80 percent of our tilapia, 50 percent of our apple juice, and 30 percent of our garlic comes from China.

This increased reliance on China has had grave consequences. In 2007, 149 Americans died after taking Heparin, a widely used blood thinner, linked to contaminants from Chinese workshops. Thousands of U.S. pets have died as a result of tainted treats from China.

Part of the problem is that some of our companies are all too willing to take advantage of China's lax safety standards, creating an un-level playing field for our home-grown producers.

But just as important has been China's failure to provide its citizens basic rights.

Chinese citizens lack the political freedom to elect officials responsive to their concerns.

There is no free press to help bring problems to public light.

There are no independent courts to ensure officials and companies follow the law.

And there is no free civil society to sustain long-term advocacy.

The costs of the current Chinese system are clear both to the Chinese people and to consumers everywhere.

Without meaningful and effective pressure from their own citizens, Chinese officials still too often choose secrecy over openness and accountability.

Congress must also give close examination to our agencies responsible for safe drugs, food, and products and to the rules of international trade agreements, to ensure we do not lower standards.

I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses.