Congressional-Executive Commission on China

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**Testimony of Cheuk Yan Lee, General Secretary Hong Kong Confederations of Trade Unions, Secretary, Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movement in China; Former Member of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong**

Thank you for the invitation to this hearing on the state of Hong Kong and “One Country Two Systems.”

This year is the 30th anniversary of the June 4th massacre in Tiananmen Square and cities across China.

In 1989, I was then a hopeful young labour and democracy activist who went to Beijing to support the democracy movement.

I will never forget the day when one million Hong Kong people marched the narrow streets to show their support for democracy in China—which we all understood to mean that Hong Kong too could realize our aspirations for democracy.

Our hopes for democracy both in China and in Hong Kong were crushed when the tanks rolled into Tiananmen Square on June 4th, 1989.

The brutality of the Chinese Communist regime was on display then, as now. This June 4 will mark thirty years since that terrible crackdown.

Freedom of protest and expression are what distinguish Hong Kong from China.

There cannot be even one candle lit in Tiananmen Square without immediate arrest.

Although democratic dreams were denied in China, the roots of freedom took hold in Hong Kong, and despite constant pressure from Beijing, have grown. Our civil society has been under constant threat but has proven resilient.

I have now worked in the free trade union movement in Hong Kong for more than three decades. From our base in Hong Kong, we have been able to support trade unionists and workers who are risking their lives and jail to expose dangerous abuses, wage cheating and labor crackdowns in China.

I have also been a leader of the group that annually organizes the moving candlelight vigil in Hong Kong’s Victoria Park to remember the victims of the June 4 massacre.

Hong Kong people’s June 4 vigil is coming up next month. It is still the only place on Chinese soil where the truth can be heard, and where we can counter the efforts by China’s communist leaders to wipe away the memory with lies and technology.

For Hong Kong people the vigil is about our own aspirations for democracy. It is a night when parents bring their children to pass on their dreams for a democratic future.

The proposal by the Hong Kong Chief Executive to enter into an extradition agreement with China will deliver a further severe blow to Hong Kong’s high degree of autonomy and will have dire effects on our freedom, rule of law and our economic foundation as an international city.

Unfortunately, as a labor and democracy leader, and longstanding critic, I represent the type of Hong Kong citizens who are threatened by the extradition law changes. Aside from the human rights activists who make their base in Hong Kong, this proposal has already caused widespread fear among the business and professional sectors, and the political and civil society.

Hong Kong people have experienced first-hand the infamous Chinese judicial system when they work and visit China. We know it is captive of the Communist Party and notorious for trumping up charges and forced televised confessions. If the extradition law passes, any person in Hong Kong including foreign nationals can be at risk to be sent back to China for trial.

We have fought very hard to preserve freedoms and our way of life in Hong Kong since the handover 22 years ago this July. But since Xi Jinping came to power, our rule of law and way of life is deteriorating very fast.

Over the last five years, we have already seen big changes: we now have political prisoners jailed for leading the peaceful Umbrella movement.

In April, nine Umbrella leaders were convicted and some were jailed. These bogus prosecutions show the willingness of the Hong Kong government to deploy the legal system for political ends—and are designed to have a chilling effect on our whole population.

The extradition law will replace Hong Kong’s Rule of Law with Rule by Fear—as it is practised in China.

But we are always hopeful because the people of Hong Kong are fighting back. Recently more than 130,000 citizens took to the streets protesting against this proposal and many business and professional groups are voicing forcefully their opposition.

Now we ask the international community to speak up—before it is too late.

The battleground of the clash of two sets of values is now laid out in Hong Kong. We hope the American people stand with us in this fight.