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**Statement of Rep. James P. McGovern
Co-chair, Congressional-Executive Commission on China**

**Hearing on “Protection from Persecution: Establishing Humanitarian
Pathways for Hong Kongers and Uyghurs”**

Tuesday, October 19, 2021, 10 a.m.

As delivered

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for convening this timely hearing on creating humanitarian pathways for people fleeing persecution in Hong Kong and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in China.

For 20 years this Commission has documented the status of human rights in China, allowing us to see trends across the years. There is no doubt that things have gotten worse under leader Xi Jinping. The scale of change is seen most dramatically, and tragically, in the two areas we are looking at today: Hong Kong and the Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims.

I need not spend time reciting these abuses, which we have documented and will be sadly familiar to those who are

watching. We appreciate that today's witnesses will testify to their own personal experiences living in Hong Kong and Xinjiang, the suffering they endured, the roads they took to exile, and the hopes they have on how we can provide a humanitarian pathway to others.

In the policy realm, Congress and the Executive Branch have responded to China's repression with multiple actions. This includes new laws to sanction Chinese officials who are complicit in human rights abuses, and to prohibit the export of crowd control equipment to security forces. Two Administrations have made a genocide determination on the Uyghurs and found that Hong Kong is no longer "sufficiently autonomous." They have blocked imports of cotton and tomatoes from Xinjiang based on forced labor, and we in Congress look to pass the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act.

All of these are worthy even as most are punitive in nature. These policies are designed to punish officials responsible and to prevent future harm.

But we must also remember that behind every account of mass atrocity or gross violation of human rights there is a human being who is suffering, an individual with their own lived experience.

So I welcome that the Commission turns its attention today to policy solutions that can have a direct, positive benefit on people. These are actions we can take that do not depend on the whims of the Chinese government. We can do this.

Members of Congress of both parties, of both bodies, have introduced legislation to help those fleeing repression in Hong Kong and Xinjiang find refuge and freedom in the United States.

The purpose of this hearing is not to pick one legislative remedy over any other. We are providing a platform to discuss the solutions and, hopefully, to propel Congressional action toward enactment. Some of these measures have passed one body or been included in larger packages. Our goal is to help get them over the finish line.

The second purpose of this hearing is to better understand the situation facing those who have fled to third countries. We have read many accounts of Uyghurs in Central Asia, Southeast Asia and Turkey who are vulnerable or at risk for deportation. Many Hong Kongers who have left continue to fear the government may harass their family who remain there, not to mention those in Hong Kong who fear being jailed under the National Security Law. I look forward to hearing what tools we have in our toolbox to help them.

Even in the United States, Hong Kongers and Uyghurs are among those who endure long waits for adjudication of their asylum claims. Fixing our broken domestic asylum processing system should be a priority.

I welcome the testimony of Congressman Malinowski and recognize that he has dedicated his life to the cause of human rights.

Thank you, and I look forward to your testimony.

