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

**Hearing on “The Future of Women in China:
#MeToo, Censorship and Gender Inequality”**

Thursday, March 1, 2022, 10:00 a.m.

As delivered

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing on the Future of Women in China, #MeToo, Censorship and Gender Inequality.

I am proud that this is the Commission’s first-ever hearing specifically on the status of women. It is timely, given the spotlight on the Peng Shuai case of sexual assault and cover up, and changes in the Party’s policy on gender.

Since 2005, the Commission has included a stand-alone section on Status of Women in its annual report. That initial entry found that while the Chinese Constitution and laws provide for equal rights of women, in reality they have fewer employment opportunities than men, and their educational levels fall below those of men.

Today we find this dynamic much the same. The Chinese government continues to implement laws and regulations aimed at equality.

For example, in January 2021, a specific definition of sexual harassment was codified in the Civil Code, creating liability for employers and detailing the kinds of conduct that would fall under the definition of sexual harassment.

But in their everyday experience, women continue to face discrimination in employment, education, wages, and legal redress.

Last September, authorities detained Sophie Huang Xueqin and Wang Jianbing, advocates of the China's #MeToo movement, under the charge of "incitement of subversion of state power." Why in the world would advocating for women's rights be considered a crime against the state?

Repression of women has also been documented in the Commission's Population Control section, on the Chinese government's heavy-handed policies to limit births, including the human rights abuses of forced abortion and forced sterilization.

We have monitored these horrific practices as part of the government's campaign against Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslim women. We will hear testimony from a survivor today.

For others in the People's Republic of China, however, these population policies are evolving, as authorities respond to the social and economic consequences of demographic changes. We would like to know where these policies are headed, and whether Chinese authorities' heavy-handed approach will manifest itself in a different way.

I welcome our witnesses, and thank Chairman Merkley for organizing this hearing, which is long overdue. I look forward to your testimonies.