ASSEMBLY CONCURRENT RESOLUTION No. 222

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
218th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MARCH 5, 2019

Sponsored by:
Assemblyman HAROLD "HAL" J. WIRTHS
District 24 (Morris, Sussex and Warren)

Co-Sponsored by:
Assemblymen Space, DiMaio, Peterson, Auth and Rooney

SYNOPSIS
Opposes sale of Westminster Choir College to Chinese government-owned company Beijing Kaiwen Education Technology.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT
As introduced.
A Concurrent Resolution opposing the sale of Westminster Choir College to Beijing Kaiwen Education Technology.

Whereas, Believing that a choir of volunteer singers could be trained to perform on a professional level, John Finley Williamson established the Westminster Choir in 1920 at the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Dayton, Ohio; and

Whereas, In 1929, the Westminster Choir College was established at Ithaca College, and three years later in 1932 the choir college relocated to Princeton, New Jersey; and

Whereas, For nearly 100 years, Westminster Choir College has been one of the nation’s premier academic institutions for advanced musical studies, preparing men and women for careers as performers and as music leaders in schools, universities, churches, and professional and community organizations; and

Whereas, Over the years the small college struggled to remain solvent, and in 1992 it merged with Rider University. The partnership continued for almost 26 years, until in 2016, Rider University President Gregory Dell’Omo announced that Rider was seeking to sell Westminster; and

Whereas, On June 21, 2018, the Rider University Board of Trustees announced that it had signed a purchase and sale agreement for the transfer of the choir college to a Chinese company, Beijing Kaiwen Education Technology (Kaiwen Education); and

Whereas, Prior to when it began operation in January 2018, Kaiwen Education was known as Jiangsu Zhongtai Bridge Steel Structure Company (Jiangsu). It has been alleged in a lawsuit brought to prevent the sale of Westminster that the steel company is a manufacturer of components of Chinese naval vessels and is a government-owned defense contractor for China’s military; and

Whereas, It has been speculated that Jiangsu changed its name to Kaiwen Education to create the appearance that it is an educational entity in order to justify its acquisition of the choir college; and

Whereas, Although often thought of as primarily a college town because of its association with Princeton University, Princeton is home to many world-renowned research centers in high technology, defense, and cyber-space and is a center of studies for the United States intelligence community; and

Whereas, Acclaimed and preeminent scientists and researchers in various fields from around the world have chosen Princeton as a place to live and work, a tradition famously highlighted by Albert Einstein’s decision to flee Nazi Germany for Princeton; and

Whereas, Given that Kaiwen Education, formerly a steel company, does not have a history in higher education, particularly professional music training, and with the multitude of world-class scientists, researchers, and institutions located in Princeton, it appears that the Chinese government may be using the guise of academia to infiltrate the choir college for nefarious purposes,
including the collection of United States intelligence and intellectual property theft; and

WHEREAS, Nothing is more vital than the safety and security of the citizens of New Jersey and the nation, and it is essential that every possible precaution is taken to ensure that a Chinese government-owned company does not exploit the openness of the world of academia to establish a foothold in our open and free society for illicit activities; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the General Assembly of the State of New Jersey (the Senate concurring):

1. The Legislature of the State of New Jersey opposes the sale of Westminster Choir College by Rider University to Beijing Kaiwen Education Technology because the proposed sale of the choir college to a Chinese government-owned company could jeopardize the security of United States citizens.

2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State, shall be transmitted by the Clerk of the General Assembly or the Secretary of the Senate to the President of Rider University and to each governing board member of Rider University.

STATEMENT

This concurrent resolution opposes the sale of Westminster Choir College by Rider University to Beijing Kaiwen Education Technology (Kaiwen Education) because the proposed sale of the choir college to a Chinese government-owned company could jeopardize the security of United States citizens.

On June 21, 2018, the Rider University Board of Trustees announced that it had signed a purchase and sale agreement for the transfer of the choir college to Kaiwen Education. Prior to when it began operation in January 2018, Kaiwen Education was known as Jiangsu Zhongtai Bridge Steel Structure Company, a government-owned Chinese defense contractor. The steel company’s main forms of business included the fabrication of large-scale bridge structures, heavy steel sections of power plants, and construction of ship blocks. Given that Kaiwen Education, formerly a steel company, does not have a history in higher education, particularly professional music training, and with the multitude of world-class scientists, researchers, and institutions located in Princeton, it appears that the Chinese government may be using the guise of academia to infiltrate the choir college for nefarious purposes, including the collection of United States intelligence and intellectual property theft.