

Madalyn Letellier

From: David Liang [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, February 3, 2025 10:51 AM
To: All City Council
Cc: Public Comments
Subject: Request to Testify on Feb 13 City Council Meeting
Attachments: Written testimony.docx

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To the City Council of Somerville,

I hope this email finds you well.

I am a resident of Somerville, hoping to testify on Feb 13 City Council meeting regarding raising awareness of the recent escalation of transnational repression of the Chinese Communist regime to our community.

My written testimony is attached below.

Should you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Thank you,

David

[REDACTED] Somerville, MA 02143
[REDACTED]

General Comments

David (Yu-Hsin Liang)

February 13, 2025

Good evening, members of the City Council and the Somerville community. My name is David Liang. I am a resident at [REDACTED]. I am here to bring attention to an issue that affects not only me but also our community—Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) transnational repression, particularly targeting Falun Gong practitioners and Shen Yun Performing Arts, even at Somerville.

For over two decades, the CCP has waged a brutal campaign against Falun Gong, which is an ancient spiritual and meditation practice with moral tenets of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance. In China, millions of practitioners have been arrested, tortured, and subjected to horrific abuses for simply following their beliefs. Practitioners face threats and intimidation from the CCP, even here in the United States. This is part of a broader pattern of transnational repression.

One of the CCP's most prominent targets outside of China is Shen Yun Performing Arts, a world-renowned performance arts company based in New York, established by Falun Gong practitioners. I watched Shen Yun for three years before I volunteered to promote the show in Boston this April.

Shen Yun celebrates traditional Chinese culture and showcases the strength and resilience of those in facing CCP's persecution. The CCP goes to great lengths to silence Shen Yun across the globe, they pressure venues to cancel shows, harass performers' families back in China.

This year, the campaign of repression grows even more intense.

Several theaters hosting Shen Yun in the U.S. Canada, and Taiwan received bomb threats. Just a month ago, the organization hosted Atlanta Shen Yun shows received mass shooting threats.

The propaganda to tarnish the image of this beautiful cultural production even appeared in an American News media.

The CCP's influence stretches into communities like ours, where practitioners and their families are not free from intimidation.

During family reunion in Christmas, a remote cousin called my practice a cult because she saw and believed the false information about the practice that was spreading on social media. Last year when I practiced meditation in the public space in the school dormitory, my residency advisor told me a Chinese student had submitted a complaint telling I was not allowed to practice in public, citing the same propaganda by the Chinese regime. Our student club activities were intimidated by faculty member with close ties to the Chinese regime, and our club websites experienced cyberattacks.

Now, I am talking one by one to my neighbors about my belief, hoping to set the record straight. What concerns me deeply is that this repression violates fundamental freedom of belief, freedom of speech. And even freedom of thought. If things we see online have been carefully manipulated and filtered, how could there be any independent thinking or sound judgements?

I urge our local officials, community leaders, and fellow residents to stand in solidarity with those who are fighting for their right to practice their faith and express their culture freely.

I'm not asking you to protect me, after all, I am just one resident in Somerville. But protect the principles that we treat each other with understanding, with mutual respect, and kindness. We live in dividing times, and compassionate dialogue is the antidote.

Together, we can resist the CCP's efforts to extend its oppressive influence into our lives here in Somerville and the Massachusetts, and work to nurture a community that cherishes freedom and respect.

Thank you.