



FROM: Reagan Dugan, Director of Higher Education Initiatives, Defending Education

TO: Federal Student Aid, U.S. Department of Education

RE: Public Comment on Information Collection Request, "Foreign Gifts and Contracts Disclosures"

DOCKET NO. ED-2026-SCC-1354 | OMB CONTROL NO. 1845-0172

DATE: JULY 27, 2026

Introduction

Defending Education (DE) is a national grassroots organization dedicated to securing a high-quality, value-neutral education for every American student. Our work draws on sustained research on foreign influence in higher education, including the mechanisms by which foreign governments and foreign-linked entities gain access to, and influence over, American colleges and universities. Section 117 of the Higher Education Act, codified at 20 U.S.C. 1011f, is the primary statutory tool for public disclosure of this activity. DE therefore has a direct interest in the renewal of this information collection.

DE writes in support of renewing OMB Control No. 1845-0172, and offers the comments below to help ensure the collection remains as effective and useful as Congress intended as it transitions to a new reporting portal.

I. The Collection Fulfills a Necessary Statutory Purpose

Section 117 fulfills a congressional transparency mandate: institutions must disclose foreign gifts and contracts of \$250,000 or more from a single foreign source within a calendar year. This mandate has existed since 1986. Renewing it is necessary to the Department's proper functions.

II. The Burden Estimate Reflects a Modest Compliance Cost

The estimate of roughly 30 minutes per response (5,207 annual burden hours/ 10,413 annual responses) is a modest per-response burden for information institutions should already have readily available as part of ordinary gift and contract administration. Since the scope of disclosure required under Section 117 is set by statute, burden estimates should be calibrated to that scope rather than treated as a lever for adjusting it.

Section 117 also serves a public transparency purpose distinct from research-security reporting. It aims to provide transparency into foreign funding relationships, not merely internal federal review. Any efforts to harmonize these reporting mechanisms should aim to preserve that public visibility.



III. Clarify How Non-Compliance Is Identified and Addressed

Section 117's transparency purpose only works if the Department can identify institutions that fail to file, file late, or file incomplete reports. As FSA continues to move this collection to a new portal, the Department should clarify how it will identify and address non-compliance going forward. Section 117's enforcement mechanism is limited to civil action to compel compliance. This makes the reporting collection itself the primary safeguard against non-disclosure. Identifying non-filers through the portal is central to the statute's purpose.

Conclusion

DE supports renewal of OMB Control No. 1845-0172. The collection is grounded in statutory mandate, the burden for institutions is modest, and the Department should use this transition to make non-compliance easier to spot.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Reagan Dugan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Reagan" and "Dugan" being capitalized and prominent.

Reagan Dugan
Director of Higher Education Initiatives
Defending Education