

# School in Winter Park among those in Florida to lose state funding



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Reporter

## **WINTER PARK, Fla. —**

A Winter Park school is one of several in Florida losing funding from the state. The funds are subsidies for school choice scholarships.

Gov. Ron DeSantis says it's because the schools have ties to China's Communist Party, or CCP.

The State Department of Education is acting against the Park Maitland School and several others in the state because of the claims of the schools' affiliations.

"We have two children here at the school, one in kindergarten, one in second grade," said Joslyn Bear.

Joslyn and her husband David Bear are not only parents, but they also attended the school years ago.

Now, the future of the school, and who could afford to attend, is in limbo.

"We feel extremely upset, not only for our own children but all the families that are affected," said Joslyn Bear.

Park Maitland is one of several schools in the state now with suspended eligibility for that important school choice scholarship funding.

David said without the school's funding, parents are blindsided with hundreds or thousands of dollars they suddenly must come up with. They said it could ultimately lead to their kids' friends, or even teachers, leaving.

"I really find it abhorrent that a political PR move would be done at the expense of children and the children's educational and social experiences," David Bear said.

According to Park Maitland's website, the school is run by Spring Education Group.

Spring Education Group itself is owned by a Chinese-based investment group, Primavera Capital Group.

"There's has never been any sort of teaching of communism or Chinese ideology. It's the furthest thing from our mind," Joslyn Bear said.

DeSantis, Education Commissioner Manny Diaz Jr., and Park Maitland all issued statements on the matter.

"The Chinese Communist Party is not welcome in the state of Florida," said Gov. Ron DeSantis. "We will not put up with any attempt to influence students with a communist ideology or allow Floridians' tax dollars to go to schools that are connected to our foreign adversaries."

"The Chinese Communist Party has no place in our schools," said Education Commissioner Manny Diaz Jr. "I am grateful for Governor DeSantis and the Florida Legislature for their work to keep students and our communities safe from foreign countries of concern."

Park Maitland School released a statement, saying:

"We have received notice from the State that our eligibility for Florida Choice school funds has been suspended. We were not contacted in advance and are seeking more information regarding the basis for this decision. In the meantime, we will be working directly with our families to ensure they can remain enrolled in our school," Park Maitland said in a statement.

"We are regularly acknowledged as one of the best private schools in our area and have a track record of delivering outstanding educational outcomes,

which is why parents choose us. Our schools are locally run, abide by local, state, and federal laws, and do not have ties to any government or political party, either foreign or domestic. Our curriculum is accredited, standards-based, and academically rigorous," Park Maitland said in a statement.

Cailey Myers, a Communications Director for the Florida Department of Education sent WESH this statement.

"The Department investigated these four schools that have ties to the CCP and China and verified their connections. As you can see, the four schools in the press release (all owned by the same company) have the following statement on their websites confirming their affiliation with Spring Education Group and Primavera Holdings:

'Spring Education Group is controlled by Primavera Holdings Limited, an investment firm (together with its affiliates) principally based in Hong Kong with operations in China, Singapore, and the United States, that is itself owned by Chinese persons residing in Hong Kong.'

On September 22, the Department of Education sent letters to the schools notifying them of their immediate suspension from the school choice scholarship program, and they have 15 calendar days to appeal the decision."

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