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Asian Americans Advancing Justice |
AAJC

President and CEO
Maya Wiley

July 25, 2024

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
House Minority Leader
2433 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Johnson, and Minority Leader Jeffries:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 240 national organizations to promote and protect the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States and the undersigned 39 organizations, we write to urge you to take an inclusive approach in congressional action to counter all forms of hate.

Our country finds strength in diversity and unity — and every person deserves to live in a community that is safe, welcoming, and inclusive. Yet in recent years, world events, growing political polarization, disinformation, and heightened racial, ethnic, and religious tensions have contributed to the highest number of reported hate crimes on record. These acts of hate touch every community and threaten to undermine the most basic tenets of our democracy. This troubling increase in the prevalence of hate, manifesting in more frequent and more severe acts of violent hate crime, requires an escalated, more inclusive approach.

At a time of increased concerns about anti-Arab, anti-Jewish, and anti-Muslim hate, the [FBI's 2022 Hate Crime Statistics Act report](#) documented a record high 11,643 hate crimes, including record numbers of reported hate crimes on the basis of race (6,570), the highest number of crimes directed against Black Americans since 2000 (3,424), and record high reported crimes directed at people and institutions on the basis of religion (2,044) and sexual orientation (1,947). In addition, a recent [FBI Special Report on hate crime at schools 2018-2022](#) documented an increase in hate violence in K-12 schools and colleges and universities.

At this critical juncture, it is essential that administration and congressional efforts prioritize the need to combat all forms of hate, to promote mutual respect and understanding, and to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their background, feel protected and valued.

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During the White House’s 2022 United We Stand Summit, the Biden administration stressed the need for a whole-of-society, coordinated effort to combat all forms of hate and bigotry that fuel toxic divisions in our country. A broad coalition of civil rights and community organizations support this inclusive and intersectional approach to preventing and responding to hate. Indeed, it is essential to make progress in our interconnected struggle for equality and justice.

Now is the time for more robust, more concerted interracial and intercommunal approaches designed to address hate. The undersigned organizations are united in support of these actions, which Congress should immediately implement:

Increase Interagency Coordination Against Hate. Congress should enact legislation to institutionalize President Biden’s United We Stand Summit commitment to establish an interagency initiative on hate crimes, authorize \$10 million to fund its continued implementation, and require periodic reports from the White House that outline the work of the initiative, including: how each agency has addressed hate crime issues, prevention and training initiatives, as well as research and programmatic plans for the next fiscal year.

Pass the Improving Reporting to Prevent Hate Act. Congress should pass the Improving Reporting to Prevent Hate Act (H.R. 7648), which would condition federal funding under the Safe Streets Act on credible hate crime reporting to the FBI for law enforcement agencies serving populations of more than 100,000.

Address White Supremacy in Federal Law Enforcement. Congress should enact legislation to require the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice, and the FBI — and all other federal agencies with law enforcement responsibility — to promptly “avoid the hiring and retention of law enforcement officers who promote unlawful violence, white supremacy, or other bias against persons based on race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), or disability” as mandated in President Biden’s [May 2022 police reform executive order](#).

Increase Funding for the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR). Congress should enact legislation — the Showing Up for Students Act, [S. 3883](#) and [H.R. 8271](#) — to double OCR’s funding. [The Leadership Conference and more than 90 civil rights and education groups](#) are [on record in support of doubling the funding for OCR](#).

Increase Funding for Community-based Hate Crime Prevention Initiatives. Congress should increase funding for Department of Justice community-based programs authorized by the [COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act](#), which includes the Jabara Heyer NO HATE Act, by an additional \$30 million, including increased funds for state hate crime hotlines to promote expanded victim reporting and assistance and support services and restorative justice initiatives for those targeted and impacted by bias-motivated harms.

The administration and Congress must take meaningful action that prioritizes combatting all forms of hate, promoting mutual respect and understanding, and ensuring that all people in America, regardless of their background, feel protected and valued. If you have any questions, please contact Nadia Aziz, senior director of the fighting hate and bias program at The Leadership Conference, at aziz@civilrights.org.

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Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
2nd Lieutenant Richard W. Collins III Foundation
Arab American Institute (AAI)
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action
Center for Security, Race and Rights
Equality California
Hindu American Foundation
Human Rights Campaign
Human Rights First
Japanese American Citizens League (JACL)
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
Legal Action Center
MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund)
Matthew Shepard Foundation
Montgomery County Progressive Asian American Network (MoCoPAAN)
Muslim Public Affairs Council
NAACP
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF)
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity
National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA)
National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI)
National Black Justice Collective
National Council of Jewish Women
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
National Urban League
Not In Our Town
PERIL: the Polarization & Extremism Research and Innovation Lab
Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)
Sikh Coalition
Silver State Equality
SPLC Action Fund
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
The Arc of the United States
The Workers Circle
UnidosUS
Western States Center