

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

May 18, 2022

The Honorable Merrick B. Garland  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Garland,

We write regarding the creation of the \$5,000,000 appropriated in the FY22 Omnibus for *Community-Based Approaches to Advancing Justice*. As we approach the one year anniversary of the signing of P.L. 117-13, the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act, the Department's collaboration with community-based organizations is critical to combating hate crimes and assisting victims and their families in recovery. As you work to establish and administer this new grant, we urge you to prioritize specific eligibility requirements to ensure this money is flowing directly into the communities impacted by hate crimes.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, hate crimes and incidents against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) have been on the rise. Over 10,000 hate incidents have been reported to non-profit groups collecting this data from March 2020.<sup>1</sup> These hate incidents include instances of verbal harassment, physical assault, shunning, online harassment as well as additional instances of discrimination.

Throughout the pandemic, individual activists and community-based organizations have taken it upon themselves to address the rise in hate crimes and promote public safety. Across our nation organizations have responded to the surge in hate crimes and hate incidents by working with local law enforcement to standardize the collection and reporting of hate crimes, as well as providing de-escalation training, victim support services, and community safety programs to protect vulnerable AAPIs.

As your Department establishes the new grant program, created in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022, to support community-based organizations and civil rights groups in addressing hate crimes, we urge you to prioritize awarding grants for organizations that provide the following:

- *Providing in-language victim/family support services.* The AAPI community is made up of over 50 subethnic groups who speak over 100 languages. This diversity must be acknowledged and prioritized to ensure that victims and their families, are receiving aid in the most accessible manner. Grants should be prioritized for organizations that can

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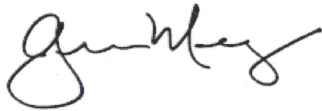
<sup>1</sup> Dr. Aggie Yellow Horse, Dr. Russell Jeung, & Ronae Matriano, "National Report (Through December 31, 2021)," *Stop AAPI Hate*, March 4, 2022, <https://stopaapihate.org/statement-report-shows-almost-11000-hate-incidents-most-reported-by-women/>.

provide in-language services to victims and their families to ensure equitable access to legal, mental health, and medical care services.

- *Supporting data collection and reporting of hate incidents.* Data on hate crimes and hate incidents will always leave out victims if the intake platforms are not accessible. Community-based organizations are positioned well to assist law enforcement in ensuring that reporting of biased or hate incidents are available to the community members most at risk. Grants should prioritize organizations that are working to raise awareness of reporting tools in vulnerable communities.
- *Neighborhood Safety Programs.* Sadly, data indicates that bias sentiments against Asian Americans are continuing to rise. A recent study found that in 2022, Americans are more likely to believe that Asian Americans are more loyal to their country of origin than the United States.<sup>2</sup> Grants should be prioritized for organizations that can provide de-escalation trainings, safety ambassador programs, mental health first aid, bystander, and self-defense trainings.

Inclusion of these recommendations would ensure this newly created grant program is not only robust, but successful in helping communities combat hate. We are grateful for your leadership and applaud your efforts to counter the rise in hate crimes and hate incidents. We look forward to working together to keep our communities safe from violence.

Sincerely,



Grace Meng  
United States Representative



Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator

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<sup>2</sup> “Social Tracking of Asian Americans in the U.S. Index Report 2022,” TAAF and LAAUNCH, <https://staatus-index.s3.amazonaws.com/STAATUS%20Index%202022%20Report.pdf>.