

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 18, 2021

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

The Honorable Christopher Wray
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20535

Dear Director Wray:

I write to express alarm over the rising rate of violent hate crimes and other unlawful acts against members of the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. Tuesday's horrific mass murder of eight individuals – six of whom were members of the AAPI community – underscores the urgent and grave threat facing these Americans. As you previously testified before Congress in early 2020, hate crimes and domestic terrorism are “close cousins” and racist violence poses a threat to Americans on par with foreign terrorist threats.

Now is the time to mobilize nationwide the full force of Federal law enforcement's capacity and capability to prioritize identifying, investigating and arresting perpetrators of domestic terrorism, hate crimes and other violent and threatening acts against the AAPI community. The United States Government must be strong and resolute in demonstrating there will be zero tolerance for such hate and that perpetrators of such threats and crimes against Asian Americans will be aggressively hunted down by law enforcement authorities.

I commend President Joe Biden for recognizing the dire homegrown national security threat posed by anti-AAPI violence by issuing a presidential memorandum just days after taking office, “Memorandum Condemning and Combating Racism, Xenophobia, and Intolerance Against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the United States.” I strongly support all pillars outlined in that January 2021 presidential memorandum and believe the increasing and evolving nature of the threat to the AAPI community demands a proactive and aggressive response from Federal, State and local law enforcement.

Accordingly, I request that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI):

- Direct the National Joint Terrorism Task Force to lead the network of approximately 200 Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTFs) throughout the country in accelerating and enhancing efforts to prioritize identifying, investigating and arresting suspects seeking to commit violent crimes targeting members of the AAPI community; and
- Establish a centralized domestic intelligence hub to collect information on threats and violence against the AAPI community, analyze the nature of such threats and identify fact patterns and push out enhanced guidance to assist State and local law enforcement in recognizing and responding to AAPI hate crimes and other violent threats and acts.

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The FBI's JTTF network represents our Nation's preeminent resource for bringing together law enforcement and intelligence experts to effectively respond to domestic terrorism, which as you observed, may involve crimes that bear a close relationship to, or overlap with, hate crimes. Now is the time to mobilize and focus this valuable law enforcement and domestic intelligence resource to combat the rise in violence against the AAPI community.

This national effort would support complementary initiatives to strengthen the FBI's ongoing efforts to counter all domestic violent extremism – which the Office of the Director of National Intelligence recently concluded poses an elevated threat to the United States in 2021. Such concerted action would also be consistent with operational decisions by local law enforcement, such as the Chicago Police Department and the New York Police Department's Counterterrorism Bureau, to bolster deployments of assets to AAPI communities out of an abundance of caution.

In closing, I am keenly aware of the daunting challenge presented in seeking to detect, disrupt and deter domestic violent extremists and purveyors of hate, particularly lone offenders. However, the magnitude of this challenge should serve to galvanize and renew the FBI's determination to establish justice and ensure domestic tranquility for all Americans.

Thank you in advance for prioritizing the mission of protecting the AAPI community against the rising threat of violent hate.

Sincerely,



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator