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October 15, 2024

Senator Dick Durbin  
Chair  
Committee on the Judiciary  
U.S. Senate  
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Durbin,

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 240 national organizations committed to promoting and protecting the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States, and the undersigned 34 members of our Hate Crimes Task Force, we write to acknowledge your leadership in response to the rise in hate crime so many communities have been experiencing. Since The Leadership Conference's founding in 1950, we have helped secure the passage of every major civil rights law, from the Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1964, to the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act, which included the Khalid Jabara and Heather Heyer NO HATE Act, and many more. Our Hate Crimes Task Force focuses its coalition efforts on raising awareness of crimes or incidents based in hate, strengthening hate crime laws and reporting and data collection, and opposing executive actions and rhetoric that are polarizing and divisive.

We would like to thank you for holding the hearing on "*A Threat to Justice Everywhere: Stemming the Tide of Hate Crimes in America*" in the Senate Judiciary Committee. The increase in political polarization, disinformation, and heightened racial, ethnic, and religious tensions has contributed to unprecedented surges in hate crimes. Considering this current climate and the rise in hate that so many of our communities have been experiencing, it was especially important for the committee to hold a hearing in which the problem could be discussed in a comprehensive manner. We deeply appreciate the important leadership you have shown in bringing the issue of hate crime to the forefront.

In addition to our gratitude, however, we want to call attention to a significant failure of the hearing. Rather than examining an issue critical to our democracy and safety of our people, some minority members on the committee used the hearing to hurl hate-filled rhetoric and dehumanizing stereotypes about Arabs, including Palestinians, to launch personal attacks at Maya Berry, executive director of the Arab American Institute and co-chair of The

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Leadership Conference Hate Crimes Task Force. The importance of, and clear need for, the hearing was evident given the harmful remarks made by these members. We want to express our sincere disappointment in the conduct of these minority members of the committee who asked extremely biased, racist, and bigoted questions, which elevated unfounded claims that serve to legitimize dangerous stereotypes of Arab Americans and Muslims. Senator John Kennedy's remarks were particularly egregious, and our coalition demands that he issue a public apology to Maya Berry.

We also ask that the committee give consideration to our task force recommendations on how the federal government can counter hate. It was Ms. Berry's intention to elevate these [policy priorities](#) during the hearing before it was derailed by minority members. Given these circumstances, we wish to highlight asks that are further detailed in our "[Letter from Civil Rights Organizations on Countering All Forms of Hate](#)," from July 2024, where we called upon Congress to:

- Increase Interagency Coordination Against Hate
- Pass The Improving Reporting to Prevent Hate Act
- Address White Supremacy in Federal Law Enforcement
- Increase Funding for the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR)
- Increase Funding for Community-based Hate Crime Prevention Initiatives

Antisemitism is real, and we must confront it. However, hiding behind the very real concern we should all have for our Jewish community cannot be allowed to mask vile bigotry. We will not tolerate hate of any kind, including the anti-Arab racism evidenced by the hearing. Given the increased vitriol and charged climate around the election, these concerns must be taken seriously. As you know, and as our [report Cause for Concern 2024: The State of Hate](#) highlights, there are increased numbers of hate incidents around general election cycles. This greatly increases the need for public officials to speak out against hate and refrain from appeals to bigotry. That is why the hearing was so important to get done right.

Despite your leadership, the dehumanizing remarks made by some committee members make it clear that bigoted and unfounded claims are being normalized in the cultural discourse and rhetoric. Not only is this type of speech harmful to those present, it also circulates unchecked online and on social media platforms, undermining our democracy. Words are not just words, and when elected officials use their platforms to further dehumanize vulnerable groups, they give implicit approval for their supporters to respond with violence and hate.

We thank you for convening this important hearing, but recognize the work ahead to ensure that hate has no place in our communities and our Congress.

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
2nd Lieutenant Richard W. Collins III Foundation  
Advocates for Trans Equality  
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)  
Americans for Democratic Action (ADA)

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Arab American Institute  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice- AAJC  
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action  
California Association of Human Relations Organizations  
Engage Action  
Human Rights Campaign  
Human Rights First  
Interfaith Alliance  
Japanese American Citizens League  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law  
Matthew Shepard Foundation  
Montgomery Country Progressive Asian American Network (MoCoPAAN)  
Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC)  
NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc.  
National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA)  
National Black Justice Collective  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)  
National Organization for Women  
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)  
Southern Poverty Law Center  
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights  
The Sikh Coalition  
UnidosUS  
UNITED SIKHS  
Western States Center

CC: Senate Majority Leader Charles "Chuck" Schumer