

April 14, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

We have all witnessed the horrific surge in violence directed against Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities in our cities, in our States, and in our country since the start of the coronavirus pandemic—spurred by racism, xenophobia, bigotry, and hate. This painful moment requires us to be leaders. It requires us to stand up—together and in bipartisan solidarity—to forcefully reject this ugly hate and violence, and it also requires us to take action.

This week, the United States Senate has the opportunity to come together and take action to address this surge in violence against AAPI communities by passing the *COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act* (S.937), and we urge you to come together in unity to pass this critical legislation.

On March 16, 2021, a shooter murdered 8 people in the Atlanta, Georgia region in 3 separate shootings that took place at Asian American-owned spas. Of the 8 innocent lives lost—7 were women, 6 were women of Asian descent, and several were immigrants. The victims included Xiaojie “Emily” Tan, Daoyou Feng, Delaina Ashley Yaun, Paul Andre Michels, Yong Ae Yue, Soon Chung “Julie” Park, Hyun Jung Grant, and Suncha Kim.

This hateful tragedy devastated the AAPI community in Georgia and throughout our nation. And we have witnessed this agony and felt the deep pain of the victims’ loved ones, of leaders in the AAPI community, and of our friends and neighbors, who have experienced this hate firsthand.

This tragedy came in the midst of an alarming surge in reported anti-Asian hate crimes, discrimination, and incidents that have caused many members of the AAPI community in our States to feel fearful and unsafe. Racist and anti-Asian terminology and rhetoric have perpetuated anti-Asian stigma that has resulted in members of the AAPI community being senselessly harassed, assaulted, and scapegoated for the pandemic.

This is a moment of deep and tragic darkness for our nation. But the United States Senate can be a beacon of hope and light in this moment by passing the *COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act*, which would address the surge in violence against AAPI communities by dedicating an official at the U.S. Department of Justice to expeditiously review hate crimes reported to law enforcement. The bill also provides resources for communities to come together and fight intolerance and hate, and strengthens the enforcement of hate crimes laws already on the books.

Colleagues, many argue that the Senate can no longer legislate in a bipartisan manner to address our country’s toughest challenges. We reject that assumption. And we boldly call on all of our colleagues to put aside partisan politics and posturing to come together and reject violence against the AAPI community. Let us send a clear message that hate, bigotry, and anti-Asian sentiment have no place in our country.

The people of the United States will always remember the victims of these senseless acts of violence. Let this painful moment in our history also be remembered as a time when the United States Senate stood in solidarity with those affected by these acts of hate and violence, and acted to address this hate and prevent acts of violence like this from happening again. We owe this to the victims. We owe this to our AAPI community. We owe this to our nation.

Sincerely,



Reverend Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator