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September 24, 2020

The Honorable Bennie Thompson
Chairman, Committee on
Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Ranking Member, Committee on Homeland
Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Thompson and Ranking Member Rogers:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 220 national organizations to promote and protect the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States, and the organizations listed below, we write to support your efforts to hold Acting Homeland Security Secretary Chad Wolf and the other political appointees at the Department of Homeland Security accountable for efforts to coverup what they perceived as politically damaging intelligence activity. This activity was revealed in former DHS appointee Brian Murphy's recently released whistleblower report.¹ Specifically, we call for a full and thorough investigation into these efforts by Mr. Wolf and his colleagues at DHS to cover up the extent of the threat that white supremacists pose to the national security of our country. Finally, we call for a CRO audit of DHS expenditures and investments away from true threats like the threat of white supremacy as documented by intelligence reports during this Administration. Following Mr. Wolf's defiance of this committee's subpoena to testify before your committee last week and during the week of his confirmation hearing before the Senate, we look to your leadership at this time with even greater urgency. Learning about this intelligence, how DHS officials were able to improperly and potentially unlawfully influence the intelligence reports, and what actions must be taken to address these problems is a civil rights priority, will help keep our communities safe, and enable all of us to hold this and future Administrations accountable.

Intelligence Information about White Supremacy is Critical to Keeping Our Communities Safe

There is nothing political about the grave national security threat posed by white supremacists to our democracy. And as organizations privileged to work with communities targeted for hate by white supremacists, we know that there must be no barriers to accessing information that could protect our communities from the vicious hate violence that white supremacists continue to unleash across this country. Therefore, it is critical that we get more information about what intelligence was lost, minimized, or altered regarding white supremacist activity in this country. And as the Committee overseeing DHS, it is essential

¹ The Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General, *Whistleblower Reprisal Complaint*, September 8, 2020,
https://intelligence.house.gov/uploadedfiles/murphy_wb_dhs_oig_complaint9.8.20.pdf

that we understand how DHS officials were able to violate DHS policy, practice, and potentially the law to try to hide this information from the country. Mr. Murphy's whistleblower report² was supported by the recently leaked drafts of a yet to be released intelligence report³ that showed that white supremacists were the most deadly threat to our national security, but included language changes as the versions progressed attempting to hide this truth and to advance falsehoods about far left groups posing an equal danger.

As a part of this investigation, we also urge you to hold a public hearing to ensure that the American people, including the people who suffer the greatest harm at the hands of white supremacist individuals and organizations, have the opportunity to learn how DHS and other Administration officials jeopardized their safety for political gain. We need this information to hold this and future Administrations accountable and protect our communities.

White Supremacist Violence is Killing Our Communities and Undermining Government Policy

Communities targeted for hate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, and disability have long known the real threat that white supremacists pose to them, their families, and friends. Our communities have lost loved ones to white supremacist violence, and live day to day under a shadow of fear that extends as long as our country's history and as far as the ongoing legacy of slavery today. Of course, our communities also know the generations of government policy and practice of simply ignoring the threat posed by white supremacists to this country's security. And independent academic institutions have documented the dangerous rise in the white supremacist threats as well. Professor Brian Levin, the Director of the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism, testified before the House Committee on Homeland Security in September of 2019, explained, "[w]hite supremacist/far right extremists are now, the most ascendant transnational terror threat facing the homeland, in a fluid and somewhat diversifying risk matrix."⁴

The failure to address the threat of white supremacy has also come with an investment in policies and practices that have harmed the very same communities targeted by white supremacists. For example, federal agencies have used countering violent extremism (CVE) programs that not only failed to effectively counter violent extremism, but also targeted Black, Brown, and Muslim communities, devastating people and securitizing relationships with the very communities where we are seeing an increase in hate incidents and hate crimes. Federal agencies have had the data demonstrating the threat of white supremacy, and the time and resources to identify how to focus on and begin addressing this national security threat. But instead, this Administration has strengthened its support for CVE. A failed program lacking an evidence base, CVE programs have stigmatized religious and political beliefs as suspect, and taken valuable resources from programs that could have focused on combating white supremacist threats.

² The Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General, *Whistleblower Reprisal Complaint*, September 8, 2020, https://intelligence.house.gov/uploadedfiles/murphy_wb_dhs_oig_complaint9.8.20.pdf

³ Politico, *DHS draft document: White supremacists are greatest terror threat*, September 4, 2020, <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/09/04/white-supremacists-terror-threat-dhs-409236>

⁴ Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism, *Global Terrorism: Threats to the Homeland, Part I*, September 10, 2019, https://www.csusb.edu/sites/default/files/GLOBAL%20TERRORISM-%20cong%20BL2%2091019_0.pdf

White supremacist hate is not new – it started well before our country was founded. While the pervasive threat of white supremacists is no surprise to our organizations or the people we represent, the sense of emboldenment that this President and this Administration lend to white supremacists through their open embrace of white nationalist ideology and policy is new.

The whistleblower’s report describes brazen efforts to lie to the American people that demand action to address the grave threat posed by white supremacists and to make sure that future Administrations understand the danger of ignoring this existential threat to our democracy.

Our colleagues and community members have been in this fight against white supremacy and demanding government accountability for generations, and we are proud to continue this work. We welcome your support in this ongoing fight to expose the longstanding failure of government agencies to take the necessary action to address this grave threat to our national security⁵, and to use this information to demand action to protect our communities and save lives. Throughout your work overseeing DHS and holding its officials accountable, we ask that you maintain focus on the white supremacist intelligence coverup, share what information you can about the intelligence to help keep us safe, and demand accountability- both for the people who lied and directed the cover up, but also for future administrations. A CRO audit of DHS expenditures and investments away from true threats like the threat of white supremacy as documented by intelligence reports during this Administration would support this work, and enable us all to ensure that DHS is working to keep all of our communities safe.

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
America’s Voice
Andrew Goodman Foundation
Arab American Institute (AAI)
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action
Center for the Study of Hate & Extremism, California State University, San Bernardino
Cleveland Jobs with Justice
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
Demand Progress
End Citizens United / Let America Vote Action Fund
Equality California
Free Press Action
Government Information Watch
Hispanic Federation
Interfaith Alliance

⁵ The Washington Post, *I warned of right-wing violence in 2009. Republicans Objected. I was right.*, August 21, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/posteverything/wp/2017/08/21/i-warned-of-right-wing-violence-in-2009-it-caused-an-uproar-i-was-right/>; see also <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/09/04/white-supremacists-terror-threat-dhs-409236>

Jewish Activists for Immigration Justice of Western MA
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
League of Women Voters of the United States
Matthew Shepard Foundation
Muslim Advocates
Muslim Public Affairs Council
NAACP
National Association of Social Workers
National Council of Jewish Women
National Equality Action Team (NEAT)
National Fair Housing Alliance
National Network for Immigrant & Refugee Rights
National Organization for Women
National Partnership for New Americans
PFLAG National
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
Taos Immigrant Allies
The Sikh Coalition
Transformations CDC
UnidosUS