



James L. Madara, MD
CEO, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

james.madara@ama-assn.org

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The Honorable Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senate
109 Senate Hart Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Grace Meng
United States House of Representatives
2209 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Hirono and Representative Meng:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing to express the AMA's support for the "COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act," S. 937/H.R. 1843. This legislation seeks to address the ongoing hate and violence targeted at Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) by providing greater assistance with law enforcement response to COVID-19 hate crimes.

In particular, the legislation designates a specific employee within the U.S. Department of Justice fully dedicated to facilitating expedited reviews of COVID-19 hate crimes ultimately reported to federal, state, and local law enforcement. To help make the key provisions of the legislation more accessible and useful for various ethnicities along with marginalized and minoritized communities, the legislation also mandates the release of federal guidance for state and local law enforcement agencies to establish online reporting of hate crimes and notices regarding the availability of digital reporting in multiple different languages. In addition, the bill requires federal guidance for state and local law enforcement agencies on expanding culturally competent, linguistically appropriate public education campaigns, data collection, and public reporting of hate crimes. Finally, the Departments of Justice and Health and Human Services, in conjunction with the COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force and community-based organizations, are directed to issue guidance on best practices for mitigating racially discriminatory language when describing the current pandemic.

In addition to the horrific Atlanta spa shootings last month, data released by Stop AAPI Hate showed nearly 3,800 firsthand reports of violence, discrimination, and harassment against Asian Americans since March of last year, including more than 500 incidents in just the first two months of 2021. This number is likely an underestimate. The AMA strongly condemns xenophobic and race-based scapegoating and violence against AAPI individuals. Racism and xenophobia—in action and in language—must not be tolerated.

Thank you for your leadership in sponsoring the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act. We look forward to working with you to move this important bill forward in Congress.

Sincerely,

James L. Madara, MD