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April 16, 2021

The Honorable Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senate
713 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Grace Meng
U.S. House of Representatives
2209 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Hirono and Representative Meng:

On behalf of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), the national medical specialty association representing more than 37,400 member psychiatrists, we write to thank you for introducing H.R. 1843/ S. 937, the *COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act*. In light of the increasing violence and harassment against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the recent horrific, racially targeted shootings in Georgia, your legislation addresses a critical need to encourage best practices for tracking hate crimes and reducing the use of racially charged language in describing the pandemic and beyond.

In March of this year after the shooting in Georgia, the American Psychiatric Association [released a statement](#) expressing our solidarity with the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities. According to *Stop AAPI Hate*, a coalition that tracks incidents of violence and harassment against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the U.S., nearly 3,800 instances of discrimination against Asians occurred in the past year. That number is likely higher, given unreported cases. Your legislation seeks to address the rise of hate crimes and violence targeted at Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and will help to expedite the review of COVID-19-related hate crimes, provide support for state and local law enforcement agencies to respond to these hate crimes and better coordinate local and federal partners to mitigate racially discriminatory language used to describe the pandemic.

The APA and our members stand ready to help you advance this legislation. We are mindful of significant and long-lasting mental health impacts of the trauma caused by racially motivated incidences of hate-related violence. We offer our members' expertise in these areas as a resource. Thank you for your leadership in addressing xenophobia and the disturbing rise of violence against Asian American and Pacific Islander communities. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to combat this scourge and to support those affected by it.

Sincerely,

Saul M. Levin, MD, MPA, FRCP-E, FRCPsych
CEO and Medical Director