

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 22, 2019

Acting Secretary Kevin K. McAleenan
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Director Christopher Wray
Federal Bureau of Investigation
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20535-0001

Dear Acting Secretary McAleenan and Director Wray:

We are concerned that the Trump administration is jeopardizing our national security by failing to take domestic terrorism seriously. In particular, this administration is failing to address white supremacist extremist violence, the leading cause of domestic terrorism.ⁱ Despite the growing toll of American lives lost, most recently in El Paso, TX, white supremacist-motivated terror is not being met with the vigorous, systematic and coordinated response which this threat requires from the federal government.

We agree with Acting Secretary McAleenan that “domestic terrorism has a broad and expansive impact on American citizens” and that “these attacks not only end lives, they degrade our society.”ⁱⁱ Yet, recent news reports revealed that the White House rejected efforts to make combatting domestic terror threats a priority in the National Counterterrorism Strategy.ⁱⁱⁱ We understand that the White House wanted to solely focus on ISIS inspired violence and ignore white nationalist violence at home, despite increased warnings from law enforcement officials about the growing domestic terrorism threat.^{iv} Given this, it is deeply concerning that the final National Counterterrorism Strategy made no mention of white supremacist extremist violence and only a passing mention of domestic terrorism. It is unacceptable that political interference from the White House should prevent domestic terrorism from receiving the elevated level of focus it deserves, especially following recent, high profile terrorist attacks.

We are also alarmed to learn that the Administration is withholding internal data from Congress and the public on domestic terrorism.^v A report entitled “Domestic Terrorism in 2018,” and dated April 15, 2019, showed that white supremacists were responsible for all race-based domestic terrorism incidents in 2018. It was sent throughout the DHS fusion center network as well as federal agencies, including the FBI. However, the report was not provided to Congress despite repeated requests. The same news report also found that the Administration continues to perpetuate the concept of a danger from so called “black identity extremists” despite a conspicuous lack of evidence that such a threat exists.

Two years ago, your agencies released a report entitled “White Supremacist Extremism Poses Persistent Threat of Lethal Violence,” which highlighted the finding that white supremacists had carried out more attacks in the U.S. since 9/11 than any other extremist ideology, and that more

attacks were expected.^{vi} Despite the conclusions of that report, the Administration's budget requests have attempted to decrease funding direction toward these threats in the last two fiscal years.^{vii} As a consequence of the Trump Administration's ideologically motivated attempts to downplay the threat of white nationalist extremist violence, funding and personnel requests have not reflected real-world conditions.

Taken together, these developments give the strong impression that the Trump Administration may be endangering American lives by politicizing law enforcement and interfering with the operation of the agencies you lead. The deadly events in El Paso, TX, Pittsburgh, PA, Poway, CA, Jeffersontown, KY, Charlottesville, VA, Charleston, SC, and elsewhere make it clear that this white nationalist extremist violence is a growing threat to people in every part of the United States.

We therefore seek clarification on the following points:


1. Have requests for resources or approval of initiatives by either of your agencies to fight domestic terrorism been denied or delayed by the White House during your tenure?
2. What steps are you taking to strengthen the response by your respective agencies to domestic terrorism, and specifically white nationalist terror?
3. Do you intend to update your budgetary and staffing priorities to confront the growing threat of white supremacy and domestic terrorism? How?
4. Will you commit to sharing the best available data on white nationalist terror with Congress?
5. Given widespread, false claims to the contrary by people in positions of power and influence,^{viii} will you definitively state that white supremacy and domestic terrorism represent a real danger to American lives?


Please provide a response by September 21, 2019.

Sincerely,



Donald S. Beyer Jr.


Veronica Escobar


Salud Carbajal

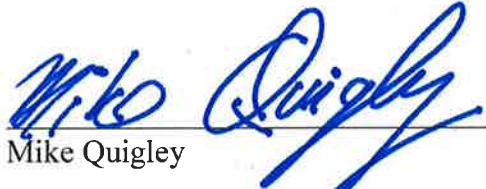

Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.

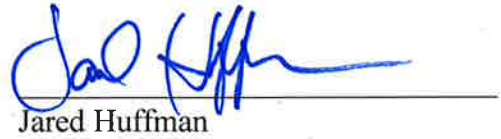

Tim Ryan


Ben Ray Lujan

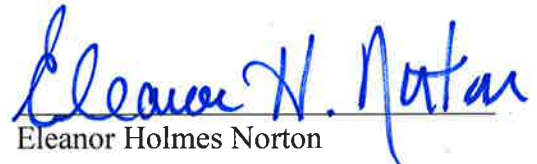

Ruben Gallego

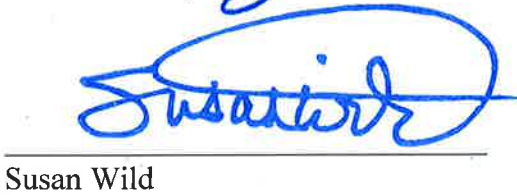

Barbara Lee


Mike Quigley


Jared Huffman

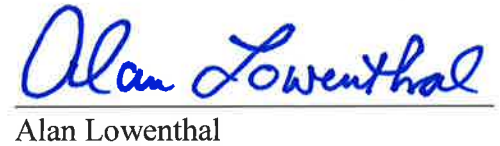

Donald M. Payne, Jr.

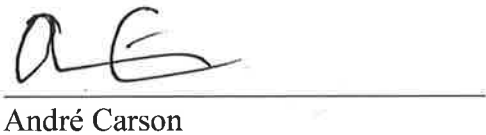

Eleanor Holmes Norton


Susan Wild


Bill Foster

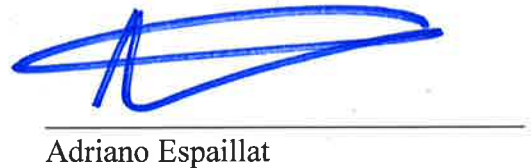

Jennifer Wexton


Alan Lowenthal

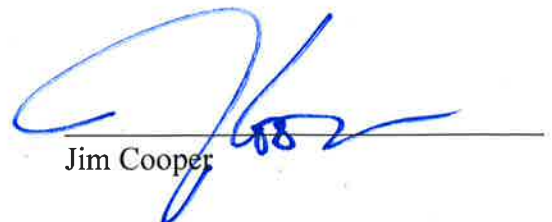

André Carson


Dwight Evans


Seth Moulton M.C.


Adriano Espaillat


Bobby L. Rush


Jim Cooper


Jamie Raskin


Brad Sherman


Sylvia R. Garcia


Bonnie Watson Coleman



Nita M. Lowey

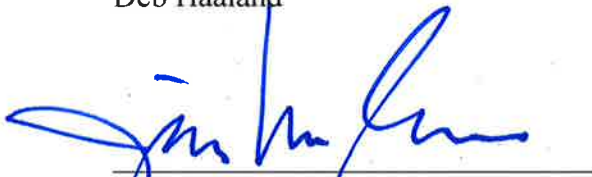

Kathy Castor



Joseph P. Kennedy, III



Andy Levin



Deb Haaland

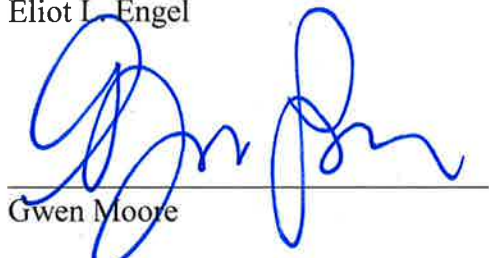

Anna G. Eshoo

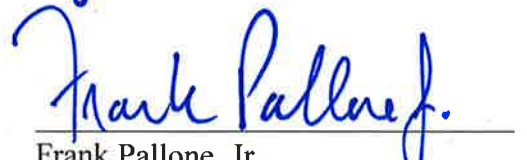

James P. McGovern


Julia Brownley


Eliot L. Engel


Jan Schakowsky


Gwen Moore


Frank Pallone, Jr.



Lizzie Fletcher



Ilhan Omar



Denny Heck



David N. Cicilline



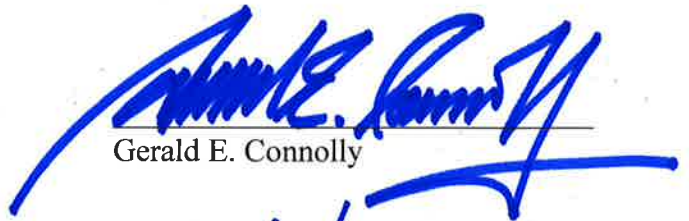
Brendan F. Boyle



Juan Vargas



Earl Blumenauer



Gerald E. Connolly



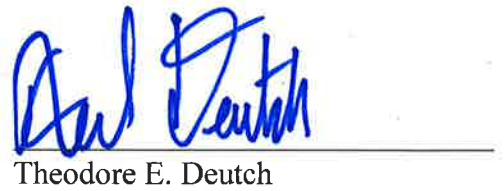
Mike Levin



TJ Cox



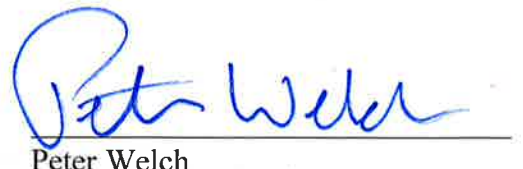
Grace F. Napolitano



Theodore E. Deutch



Mark Takano



Peter Welch



Abigail D. Spanberger



Adam Smith

Thomas R. Suozzi

Tom Suozzi

John Yarmuth

John Yarmuth

David Price

David E. Price

Raúl M. Grijalva

Raúl M. Grijalva

Tony Cárdenas

Tony Cárdenas

Norma J. Torres

Norma J. Torres

Bill Pascrell, Jr.

Bill Pascrell, Jr.

Rashida Tlaib

Rashida Tlaib

Jesús G. "Chuy" García

Jesús G. "Chuy" García

Al Green

Al Green

Tom Malinowski

Tom Malinowski

ⁱ FBI Director Christopher Wray, Testimony to Senate Judiciary Committee, July 23, 2019; Alexandra Hutzler, "FBI Director Christopher Wray Says a Majority of Domestic Terrorism Cases Are Motivated By White Supremacist Violence," *Newsweek*, July 23, 2019 <https://www.newsweek.com/domestic-terrorism-white-supremacy-violence-fbi-director-1450748>

ⁱⁱ Alexandra Hutzler, "Homeland Security Chief Says Domestic Terrorism and White Supremacy 'Not Only End Lives, They Degrade Our Society,'" *Newsweek*, August 13, 2019 <https://www.newsweek.com/homeland-security-chief-domestic-terrorism-white-supremacy-degrade-society-1454088>

ⁱⁱⁱ Jack Tapper, "Exclusive: White House rebutted attempts by DHS to make combating domestic terrorism a higher priority," *CNN*, August 7, 2019 <https://www.cnn.com/2019/08/07/politics/white-house-domestic-terrorism/index.html>;

^{iv} Ibid; Vera Bergengruen and W.J. Hennigan, "'We Are Being Eaten From Within.' Why America Is Losing the Battle Against White Nationalist Terrorism," *Time*, August 8, 2019, <https://time.com/5647304/white-nationalist-terrorism-united-states/>

^v Jana Winter and Hunter Walker, "Here's the data on white supremacist terrorism the Trump Administration has been 'unable or unwilling' to give to Congress," *Yahoo News*, August 8, 2019 https://news.yahoo.com/heres-the-data-the-trump-administration-wouldnt-give-congress-on-white-supremacist-terrorism-235254627.html?soc_src=hl-viewer&soc_trk=tw

^{vi} Jana Winter, "FBI and DHS Warned of Growing Threat From White Supremacists Months Ago," *ForeignPolicy*, August 14, 2017 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/08/14/fbi-and-dhs-warned-of-growing-threat-from-white-supremacists-months-ago/>

^{vii} Hannah Allam, "House Lawmakers To Call Out Trump Administration on White Supremacist Violence," *NPR*, June 4, 2019 <https://www.npr.org/2019/06/04/729510972/house-lawmakers-to-call-out-trump-administration-on-white-supremacist-violence>

^{viii} Emily Rueb and Derrick Bryson Taylor, "Tucker Carlson of Fox Falsely Calls White Supremacy a 'Hoax,'" *New York Times*, August 8, 2019 <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/08/business/media/tucker-carlson-white-supremacy.html>; Alexander Nazaryan, "At a white nationalist hearing on Capitol Hill, GOP witnesses dispute there's a threat," *Yahoo News*, April 9, 2019 <https://news.yahoo.com/house-white-nationalism-hearing-candace-owens-183811012.html>