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**Submitted for the House Judiciary Committee Hearing on the Southern Poverty Law Center
Wednesday, May 20, 2026**

Chairman Jordan, Ranking Members, and distinguished Members of the Committee:

My name is Shannon Adcock, founder and president of Awake Illinois, a grassroots parental rights organization based in Naperville, Illinois. I submit this statement **on behalf of Awake Illinois and its more than 100,000 members, supporters, and advocates** across Illinois and the nation. As a mother of three and a lifelong Illinoisan, I founded Awake Illinois in May 2021 as a 501(c)(4) nonprofit social welfare organization to empower parents and citizens to protect our children, defend our liberties, and preserve the American way of life.

What began as a simple act of civic engagement—advocating for due process, health freedom, curriculum transparency, parental involvement in schools, and the fundamental rights of families—quickly drew the unwanted and unjust attention of the Southern Poverty Law Center. Before the ink was even dry on our founding documents, the SPLC placed Awake Illinois on its notorious “Hate Map,” lumping us alongside the Ku Klux Klan and other actual extremists. We joined dozens of other parental rights organizations in this smear campaign—while the SPLC somehow identified only 14 KKK groups, zero Antifa networks, and zero Islamist extremist organizations worthy of equivalent scrutiny. This was not an error. It was a deliberate act of defamation designed to intimidate, isolate, and silence law-abiding American parents.

Despite these attacks, Awake Illinois has delivered real results for families. We led successful grassroots campaigns that stopped HB 2827—a sweeping bill that would have imposed heavy government oversight on homeschooling families and private schools—and HB 4876, radical legislation that would have labeled parents as child abusers for protecting their minor children from irreversible gender interventions or abortion services. In addition to these legislative victories, we have provided essential resources to thousands of Illinois families, including model opt-out forms, legal guidance, educational toolkits, and advocacy training. We have also filed multiple federal civil rights complaints to defend families against unconstitutional overreach in schools and government institutions.

The consequences of the SPLC’s label have nevertheless been tangible and damaging. The label triggered harassment, doxxing attempts, threats to our volunteers’ livelihoods, and a chilling effect on free speech and association. Media outlets repeated the smear without verification. Potential partners and donors pulled back. We had to hire private security for our events due to death threats. Our core work—fighting for parental rights, educational excellence, and the protection of all children—was falsely branded as “hate.” This is the SPLC’s well-documented business model: manufacture threats, frighten donors into writing checks, and weaponize its name to advance a partisan political agenda. Recent federal charges involving fraud and false statements only confirm the depth of the problem.



I submit this testimony today not for sympathy, but for accountability. The SPLC has distorted federal civil rights policy, influenced federal law enforcement training, and provided political cover for those who seek to marginalize mainstream American families. By equating concerned parents with violent extremists, the organization has undermined public trust, endangered innocent citizens, and betrayed the mission it claims to serve.

As stated in my open letter to the Southern Poverty Law Center Interim President Bryan Fair: **Awake Illinois and the broader parental rights movement will not be deterred.** We remain resolute in our mission to awaken citizens to the importance of parental authority, educational integrity, and constitutional liberties. The courage and determination of everyday American mothers, fathers, and community leaders will outlast any defamation campaign. Congress has both the power and the duty to restore integrity to our civil rights framework: by rejecting the SPLC's tainted designations, investigating its influence on federal agencies, and ensuring no organization can profit from defaming its fellow citizens.

Thank you for holding this important hearing and for the opportunity to place these facts into the Congressional Record. I, along with the more than 100,000 members, supporters, and advocates of Awake Illinois, stand ready to provide additional testimony, documentation, or witness support as needed.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Shannon M. Adcock'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Shannon M. Adcock
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