

National Action Network



Rev. Al Sharpton, *President & Founder*

Rev. Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson, *Chairman*

February 16th, 2022

House Committee on the Judiciary

Chairman Jerrold Nadler

2141 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington DC, 20515

Dear Chairman Nadler,

There has not been a week this month without a bomb threat at an HBCU, and the recent timing and scope of targeting Historically Black Colleges and Universities (“HBCUs”), high schools, and faith institutions echos this nation's violent history and continues to be a chronic and pervasive part of the life experience for people of color and ethnic backgrounds to have their vulnerable communal spaces threatened. Black History Month started with bomb threats targeting 16 HBCU’s coupled with recent religious and high school institutions. On January 5, eight HBCUs reported bomb threats. These incidents are not isolated. People of color or ethnic backgrounds that have experienced violence believe every danger is real.

We are one of many groups advocating for justice and equity formed in response to the experience and threat of discrimination within the civil rights movement. The National Action Network (NAN) is one of the leading civil rights organizations in the Nation, with chapters throughout the entire United States. Founded in 1991 by Reverend Al Sharpton, NAN works within the spirit and tradition of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to promote a modern civil rights agenda that includes the fight for one standard of justice, decency, and equal opportunities for all people regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, citizenship, criminal record, economic status, gender, gender expression, or sexuality.

Our nation should ensure its citizens are safe and supported regardless of race or religious beliefs – whether in a place of worship, at school, or away at college. These incidents have a long history of weaponizing fear as a tool of domestic terrorism through the lens of White supremacy. According to the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), White supremacy is a term used to characterize various belief systems central to which are one or more of the following fundamental tenets: 1) whites should dominate people of other backgrounds, especially where they may co-exist; 2) whites should live by themselves in a whites-only society; 3) white people have their own "culture" that is superior to other cultures; 4) white people are genetically superior to other people. White supremacy is far more encompassing than simple racism or bigotry.

National Action Network



Rev. Al Sharpton, *President & Founder*

Rev. Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson, *Chairman*

The visibility of HBCUs has increased in recent years, thanks to the achievements of high-profile alumni such as Vice President Harris, Sen. Raphael G. Warnock (D-Ga.), and Stacey Abrams and staff like Deon Sanders. As HBCUs have become more visible while U.S. racial tensions abound, the schools have become more apparent targets, as demonstrated by the hoax of a bomb threat. These threats, like violence and defacement against synagogues, mark an increased willingness to attack the cultural and educational institutions of groups traditionally targeted by prejudice.

Multiple studies have charted the impact of exposure to racism on people of color. On October 19, 2021, several leading pediatric organizations declared a national state of emergency for child and adolescent mental health, in part due to the immense toll of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019, the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Emergency Taskforce on Black Youth Suicide and Mental Health released a report documenting the alarming increases in Black youth suicide rates. In 2019, the American Academy of Pediatrics released a policy statement naming racism as a driver of health inequities in Black children and adolescents, including but not limited to mental health. Black teenagers may experience racism, often in the form of race-related bullying, more than five times per day, with a greater number of experiences tied to greater intensity of depressive symptoms. These institutions are where our students and community members are supposed to feel the safest from a world of anti-blackness and white supremacy.

We applaud the subcommittee for bringing this hearing to the forefront and sending a letter to Attorney Merrick Garland and FBI Director Christopher Wray on February 3rd with the Congressional Black Caucus Chair, Rep. Joyce Beatty, and Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (TX-18). We also call on the Homeland Security Subcommittee on Intelligence & Counterterrorism to conduct a parallel investigation as they have done with similar issues in the past.

Mr. Chairman, this is urgent. We will continue to call on those in positions of power, campus, community, and elected leaders to commit resources to identify and mitigate threats to HBCUs, Black students, and faith institutions.

National Action Network



Rev. Al Sharpton, *President & Founder*

Rev. Dr. W. Franklyn Richardson, *Chairman*

Yours in progress,

Ebonie Riley

Vice President of Policy and Strategic Partnerships
National Action Network

Tylik M. McMillan

National Director of Youth and College
National Action Network