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June 7, 2017

The Honorable Jeff Sessions  
Attorney General  
Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530

Andrew McCabe  
Acting Director  
Federal Bureau of Investigations  
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20535

The Honorable John Kelly  
Secretary of Homeland Security  
Department of Homeland Security  
245 Murray Lane, SW  
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Attorney General Sessions and Acting Director McCabe:

I write today to express my concern over the alarming number of hate crimes reported across the country, particularly in the wake of the election of President Donald J. Trump. In addition to speaking out against this rising tide of hate, violence, and intolerance, it is critical that your agencies proactively investigate each and every incident of a potential hate crime and aggressively prosecute these cases to the fullest extent of the law.

During the presidential campaign, then-candidate Donald Trump employed starkly divisive rhetoric to connect with a segment of his base that relished in cultural grievance and hatred. His tone and the arguments that he made were incredibly offensive to minority communities, and his campaign rallies were forums for some of the ugliest public displays of race-based violence and animus in modern political times. Numerous Black Americans were assaulted at his rallies and scenes of deep racial resentment against Blacks, Hispanics, immigrants, and Muslims were frequently paraded and celebrated.

Since the election, it seems hate-filled individuals have been emboldened to terrorize minority communities. In just the first 34 days after the election, the Southern Poverty Law Center counted a total of 1,094 bias incidents around the nation. Disturbingly, the Center also calculated that 37 percent of these cases directly referenced either President-elect Trump, his campaign slogans, or his infamous remarks about sexual assault. This data is just from the immediate aftermath of the election. The numbers have increased since then, with national

news providing coverage. These are not isolated incidents, but rather a frightening trend forming before our eyes.

In fact, this is occurring in Congress' own back yard, like the horrific hate crime that took place just a few miles away at the University of Maryland when Richard Collins III, a promising young man, was stabbed to death on the eve of his graduation from Bowie State University by an admitted white supremacist. There have also been several reports of nooses hung throughout the District of Columbia, including in the African American Museum of History and Culture and on American University's campus. To add insult to injury, a Mississippi lawmaker recently called for Louisiana politicians to be "lynched" for supporting the removal of racist confederate monuments from New Orleans.

Surely there is no greater cause of a government than to protect the lives of its citizens, particularly those uniquely vulnerable to hate, intolerance, and violence. The federal hate crimes statutes were designed with that mission in mind and serve as a critically important tool in combatting the most insidious elements of our society. That is why I implore you to dedicate additional resources within your respective agencies to address the increasing frequency of these deplorable acts. You should and must investigate each and every potential hate crime and prosecute offenders to the fullest extent allowed under the law. You should also ensure that community leaders, including state and local law enforcement, understand the federal resources available to investigate and prosecute hate crimes.

Your leadership is required to not only bring justice to the victims of hate crimes, but also to send a clear message that these acts of domestic terrorism will never be tolerated in this country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Cedric Richmond". The signature is stylized and fluid, with a large initial "C" and "R".

Cedric Richmond  
Chair, Congressional Black Caucus