

Statement of Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL)
House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties
March 18, 2021

- Thank you for the opportunity to join YOU today as our nation faces an awful spike in hate crimes, hate incidents and discrimination against the Asian American and Pacific Islander community.
- In New York, an 89-year-old was slapped and, in California, a 91-year-old was pushed to the ground.
- In the middle of a park, a little girl was shoved off her bike and, in the middle of a city sidewalk, a little boy watched as his father was beat up.
- Families have had rocks thrown at them... nurses have been spit on... heroes, frontline workers, hospital staff have been blamed for COVID-19... THEY'VE been denied service and treated as other-than... as less-than... simply because they are members of the AAPI community.
- Unfortunately, this type of prejudice is far from new.
- It's a similar brand of discrimination to the one that marred some of our country's darkest days and toughest fights, from segregation to immigration.
- It's a similar vein as to what was witnessed in World War II... as our nation incarcerated Japanese Americans because of their heritage...
 - THEY TRAPPED thousands of families, even as their loved ones sacrificed everything to defend our nation overseas.
- Fortunately, the UNITED STATES government recognized that this type of bigotry was un-American. Yet, the risk of repeating past grave errors is real and chilling.
- That's why I introduced the *Korematsu-Takai Civil Liberties Protection Act*...
 - Which would be a first step toward safeguarding freedom and establishing a clear statutory prohibition against un-American policies that seek to imprison or otherwise detain American citizens on the basis of who they are, rather than what they have done.
- And as the daughter of an American Vietnam Veteran and an immigrant with Chinese-Thai heritage, I am deeply committed to supporting our COMMUNITY'S FIGHT against discrimination.

- I applaud the efforts of this subcommittee to raise awareness of this crisis and to discuss a plan to advance civil rights for Asian Americans and protect the well-being of all our families.
- You know, the American story as we know it wouldn't exist without the strength of the AAPI community.
- In a very literal sense, Asian Americans helped build this country—laying the railroad tracks, tilling the fields, starting the businesses and picking up the rifles necessary to develop and defend the nation we love.
- And today, even as we face so much bigotry and violence, our community is helping keep this country running.
- So I just want to take a minute to thank all the incredible, heroic frontline workers who are getting our nation through this crisis.
- From the doctors and nurses risking their own lives to try to save the lives of strangers to the cashier at the market who's helping our families stay fed...
- From the janitors sweeping up HOSPITAL ROOMS at night to the teachers patiently helping our kids learn their ABCs over Zoom ...
- I hope you know that we see you and SEE YOUR sacrifices... and that we are forever in your debt.
- We'll never be able to fully express our gratitude to those of you on the frontlines. But every hour of every day, I'm gonna keep trying. Because it's the least you deserve.

So I just want to say thank you one more time. For everything that you do. For being so selfless even in the face of such prejudice. For helping our country push through this crisis, despite the fear-mongering and the racism...the alienation and the discrimination. For helping our country live up to its founding values of equality and inclusion.

- Going forward, I hope that every American will speak up against such hatred toward their neighbors... and I look forward to continue working with PRESIDENT BIDEN'S Executive Order that assists States and community organizations make this kind of discrimination a thing of the past.
- Please know that I will never stop working to protect your families, fighting day and night against the kind of bigotry that's plagued our country for far, far too long.
- Thank you.