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**CYRUS R. VANCE, JR.**  
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

May 2, 2019

The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Homeland Security  
Committee on Appropriations  
2006 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Fleischmann  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Homeland Security  
Committee on Appropriations  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Roybal-Allard and Ranking Member Fleischmann:

On behalf of the Manhattan District Attorney's Office, I appreciate this opportunity to provide written public testimony urging the House Appropriations Committee to increase funding in Fiscal Year 2020 to bolster federal law enforcement's efforts to confront domestic terrorism perpetrated by white nationalists.

FBI Director Christopher Wray made headlines in April when he testified before the House Appropriations Committee that white nationalist violence is a "persistent, pervasive threat."<sup>i</sup> Director Wray's assessment affirmed the observations of those of us tasked with protecting New York City. Our wonderful metropolis attracts people from all over the world, of all faiths and heritages, who share a common dream of a better life. Conversely, our hallowed place as a beacon of diversity – combined with our status as America's media and cultural capital – makes us a top target of hate-filled individuals who are intent on destroying lives and inciting widespread violence and fear on the largest possible stage. It is why I started a Counter Terrorism Program in my Office in 2015 to investigate, disrupt, and prosecute those individuals or groups who may be planning acts of terror or are providing material support for terrorist groups.<sup>ii</sup>

Earlier this year, my Office secured New York State's first-ever conviction for "murder as a crime of terrorism" against white nationalist terrorist James Harris Jackson for the execution of 66-year-old Timothy Caughman, an elderly black man, in midtown Manhattan.<sup>iii</sup> Jackson drove north from Baltimore on a mission to kill black men and incite a global race war. As a result, Timothy Caughman lost his life, his family lost a cherished loved one, and our community lost a valuable

member. For this senseless atrocity, Jackson will spend the rest of his life behind bars.<sup>iv</sup> With our terrorism charges, terrorism conviction, and life-sentencing, we sent a loud message to white supremacist terrorists across the world: White nationalism will not be normalized in New York.

Likewise, I hope the Jackson prosecution served as a wake-up call to law enforcement across the country. We can no longer sleep on the danger posed by this country's increasing number of white nationalists. And we cannot continue to treat this type of hate-fueled violence as a lesser form of terrorism, lest we risk normalizing this repulsive behavior and missing opportunities to prevent future attacks.

Right-wing extremists – not Jihadis or other groups – were responsible for 98 percent of the domestic extremist-related killings in the U.S. in 2018, according to a recent report published by the Anti-Defamation League's Center on Extremism.<sup>v</sup> Domestic extremists killed at least 50 people in 2018, the deadliest year since 1995 and the fourth-deadliest since 1970, the ADL reported. White supremacists committed 39 of these murders, including a massacre inside a Pittsburgh synagogue that resulted in 11 deaths. This ominous rise in deadly attacks coincides with an overall rise in hate crimes across the U.S. An estimated 7,100 hate crimes occurred in 2017,<sup>vi</sup> a 17-percent jump from the previous year,<sup>vii</sup> according to the FBI's report Hate Crime Statistics. New York has also seen a spike in hate crimes. According to police, 55 were reported as of February 17 this year, an increase of 72 percent over the same period last year.<sup>viii</sup>

Violent white nationalists might be lone wolves, as Director Wray testified, but they are not acting in a vacuum. A *New York Times* analysis of recent terrorism attacks discovered that at least one-third of white extremist killers since 2011 were “inspired by others who perpetrated similar attacks, professed a reverence for them or showed an interest in their tactics.”<sup>ix</sup> For instance, the South Carolina murderer who killed nine black people inside a Charleston church influenced the New Zealand man who police say killed 50 people inside two Christchurch mosques this March. Just a month later, authorities believe that the 19-year-old alleged to have killed one and injured three in an April 27 synagogue shooting near San Diego, California, took inspiration from the New Zealand massacre.<sup>x</sup>

Our growing understanding of these transnational connections comes amid reports that the Department of Homeland Security dismantled a group of analysts who focused on domestic terrorism.<sup>xi</sup> Would we willfully turn a blind eye to any other form of terrorism? Of course not. White nationalism is a threat that not only imperils New Yorkers; it endangers Americans in all 50 states and risks undermining the shared ideals of justice we hold so dear.

For these reasons, I support several of the timely Department of Justice-related policies expressed by Reps. Tom Malinowski (D-NJ) and Ted Deutch (D-FL) in their April 1 letter to the House Appropriations Committee.<sup>xii</sup>

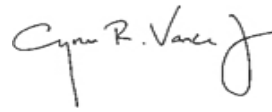
- Elevate the Counsel for Domestic Terrorism role to the rank of Assistant Attorney General and increase the staff allocated to the office to fit the need.
- Robust funding for the Office of Domestic Terrorism Counsel.

- Robust funding for the National Institute of Justice, specifically the research division on Domestic Radicalization and Terrorism.

We must confront extremism with equal seriousness and resources, regardless of the perpetrator's race, religion, or background. To do anything less is to betray our commitment to public safety, and to deny the clear threat landscape as it exists today.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this vital national security issue. If you have any questions, please contact me at 212-335-9000.

Sincerely,



Cyrus R. Vance, Jr.

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<sup>i</sup> Coaston, Jane. April 4, 2019. "FBI director: White nationalist violence is a "persistent, pervasive threat." Vox. <https://www.vox.com/2019/4/4/18295358/fbi-white-nationalism-christchurch-usa-violence>

<sup>ii</sup> Manhattan District Attorney's Office. June 24, 2015. "District Attorney Vance Testifies Before Congress Regarding Terror Financing." <https://www.manhattanda.org/district-attorney-vance-testifies-congress-regarding-terror-financing/>

<sup>iii</sup> Manhattan District Attorney's Office. January 23, 2019. "D.A. Vance Secures Domestic Terrorism Conviction of James Jackson For White Supremacist Murder of Timothy Caughman." <https://www.manhattanda.org/d-a-vance-secures-domestic-terrorism-conviction-of-james-jackson-for-white-supremacist-murder-of-timothy-caughman/>

<sup>iv</sup> Manhattan District Attorney's Office. February 13, 2019. "D.A. Vance: James Jackson Sentenced to Life Without Parole For Murdering Timothy Caughman to Incite a "Race War." <https://www.manhattanda.org/da-vance-james-jackson-sentenced-to-life-without-parole-for-murdering-timothy-caughman-to-incite-a-race-war/>

<sup>v</sup> Anti-Defamation League. "Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2018." <https://www.adl.org/murder-and-extremism-2018#executive-summary>

<sup>vi</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation. "2017 Hate Crime Statistics." <https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2017/topic-pages/incidents-and-offenses>

<sup>vii</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation. "2016 Hate Crime Statistics." <https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2016/topic-pages/incidentsandoffenses>

<sup>viii</sup> Otterman, Sharon. February 18, 2019. "Anti-Semitic Attacks Fuel Continuing Rise in Hate Crimes in New York." New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/18/nyregion/anti-semitism-brooklyn-new-york.html>

<sup>ix</sup> Cai, Weiyi and Simone Landon. April 3, 2019. "Attacks By White Supremacists Are Growing. So Are Their Connections." New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/04/03/world/white-extremist-terrorism-christchurch.html>

<sup>x</sup> Medina, Jennifer, Mele, Christopher and Heather Murphy. April 27, 2019. "One Dead in Synagogue Shooting Near San Diego; Officials Call It Hate Crime." New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/27/us/poway-synagogue-shooting.html>

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<sup>xi</sup> Woodruff, Betsy. April 2, 2019. "Homeland Security Disbands Domestic Terror Intelligence Unit." The Daily Beast. <https://www.thedailybeast.com/homeland-security-disbands-domestic-terror-intelligence-unit>

<sup>xii</sup> Malinowski, Tom and Ted Deutch. April 1, 2019. "CJS and DHS Approps Requests." <https://malinowski.house.gov/sites/malinowski.house.gov/files/CJS%20and%20DHS%20Approps%20Requests.pdf>