



March 25, 2021

The Honorable Grace Meng  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mazie Hirono  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Rep. Meng and Sen. Hirono:

On behalf of the American College of Physicians (ACP), I am writing to express our strong support for the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act, (H.R. 1843, S. 937), a bill that that would enhance the federal, state, and local response to hate crimes and violence related to the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which is caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). We commend you for taking this essential step to support the health and safety of our nation during a national crisis and a public health emergency (PHE) by proposing that Congress take direct action to respond to expressions of racism, xenophobia, discrimination, anti-Asian sentiment, scapegoating, and ethnic or religious intolerance. We especially share your alarm about reported incidents of harassment and violence against members of the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community and ACP has [spoken out](#) strongly against these terrible acts in the past.

The American College of Physicians is the largest medical specialty organization and the second-largest physician membership society in the United States. ACP members include 163,000 internal medicine physicians (internists), related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge and clinical expertise to the diagnosis, treatment, and compassionate care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness. Internal medicine specialists treat many of the patients at greatest risk from COVID-19, including the elderly and patients with pre-existing conditions like diabetes, heart disease and asthma.

ACP strongly condemns any and all prejudice, discrimination, harassment and violence against individuals based on their race, ethnic origin, ancestry, gender, gender identity, nationality, primary language, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, cultural background, age, disability, or religion. As our country and our health care system bear the overwhelming challenge of continuing to respond to the PHE caused by COVID-19, this ethos is more important than ever. We are deeply concerned and disturbed about the [increasing reports](#) of harassment against individuals of Asian descent, including physicians and other clinicians. At this challenging time, our nation's focus should be on respecting the dignity of others. We cannot allow prejudice and discrimination to divide us.

Hate crimes directed against individuals based on their race, ethnic origin, ancestry, gender, gender identity, nationality, primary language, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, cultural background, age, disability, or religion are a true threat to the overall public health. ACP supports the development and implementation of anti-discrimination and hate crime laws. We applaud that the COVID-19 Hate

Crimes Act would: 1) require the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force, and community-based organizations to work together to create guidance for the best ways to eliminate racially discriminatory language related to describing the COVID pandemic; 2) issue guidance for state and local law enforcement agencies to establish online hate crime reporting and expand culturally competent public education and to collect data to document the rise of incidences of hate crimes due to COVID-19; and 3) have the U.S. Department of Justice create a designated position to expedite review of COVID-19 hate crimes reported to federal, state, and local law enforcement. ACP policy supports the collection and publication of statistics on hate crimes. We also strongly believe that more research is needed about the impact of hate crimes on public health, understanding and preventing hate crimes, and effective interventions that address the needs of hate crime survivors and their communities.

ACP has long fought against discrimination due to race, ethnic origin, nationality, cultural background and other personal characteristics. Our policies have called attention to the [public health impact of hate crimes](#) and discrimination, and to the harmful consequences of [racial and ethnic disparities in health care](#). Therefore, it is imperative that physicians, and all people, speak out against hate and discrimination, especially during this national crisis caused by COVID-19.

We applaud your leadership in bringing forth the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act and urge Congress to now pass this bill in order to bring the necessary awareness, focus, and response to past and future acts of discrimination, harassment, and violence against members of the AAPI community due to COVID-19. As physicians, we are uniquely situated to speak out against these hateful, discriminatory, and violent acts and inform the public about why these acts are wrong and misguided. We look forward to working with you to advance this legislation through Congress and stand ready to serve as a resource for you about any matters regarding the COVID-19 PHE.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jacqueline W. Fincher MD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jacqueline W. Fincher, MD, MACP  
President