



Dear Members of the Committee on Public Safety and Security:

My name is Josh Guo and I am an undergraduate student at Yale University. I write in support of **SB-122: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A UNIT WITHIN THE DIVISION OF STATE POLICE TO INVESTIGATE HATE CRIMES AND CRIMINAL ACTS COMMITTED BY EXTREMIST GROUPS.**

Hate crimes are on the rise in Connecticut, as they are across the nation. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the divisions that already exist between racial, ethnic, religious, and gender groups. Some of these divisions have worsened to the extent that they prompt violent action by an individual or group of individuals towards neighbors of minority status. One of the most significant duties of a government, whether it be federal, state, or local, is to assure the protection of its governed citizens. S.B. 122, through “establish[ing] a unit within the State Police to investigate hate crimes and criminal acts committed by extremist groups,” will hold Connecticut accountable to this responsibility.

In a recent editorial piece, Sen. Martin M. Looney makes a convincing case for the bill in writing “It is evident that a task force to investigate these trends should be established...our state police have already created task forces to pursue crimes including narcotics sales, home invasions, motor vehicle fraud, urban violence, automotive theft, and illegal firearms...a task force to investigate hate crimes and violence based on ideology is a necessity to preserve the safety and peace of mind of the people of Connecticut.”

According to the Connecticut 2017 Bias Crime Report, in 66 of the 110 hate crime incidents reported, there is no information about the offender. How can we expect to prosecute a person we have no information about? This issue will be eliminated for the most part with the formation of a police unit dedicated to cracking down on hate crime incidents. Furthermore, there has been an increase in the activity among extremist groups in Connecticut. The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) reports that in 2015, there were only two groups motivated by bias and bigotry operating within the state of Connecticut. However, in 2020, the SPLC listed *six* different hate groups that were tracked by law enforcement in Connecticut. The need for legislative action has never been greater.

As an Asian-American myself, my community has been under assault with hate crimes since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, almost one year ago. It pains me to read the stories, watch brutal videos, and learn the names of countless Asian elderly or families killed based on a falsely xenophobic and racist sentiment arising from the pandemic. And it pains me even more to hear endless thoughts, prayers, and empty promises that result in no concrete action against preventing these hate crimes from ever occurring again. To do so, we **MUST** give it the unique attention that they deserve through this task force. To fail to do so would be a failure on our government's part to protect the fundamental right to security that all races and ethnicities, especially AAPI people, should and must have. To fail to do so would reinforce the message that we have been receiving for not just the past year, but throughout the entire history of our time in this country—that our government just does not care.

I hope that the evidence presented in this testimony is sufficient enough to prove that **SB-122: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A UNIT WITHIN THE DIVISION OF STATE POLICE TO INVESTIGATE HATE CRIMES AND CRIMINAL ACTS COMMITTED BY EXTREMIST GROUPS** will be an extremely beneficial policy to pass for all citizens of Connecticut, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or sexual orientation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

With gratitude,

Josh Guo