

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

November 18, 2022

Merrick B. Garland
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

Dear Attorney General Garland:

We write to you today out of concern for the growing threats of violence against health care providers and patients due to anti-transgender extremism. We appreciate that, under your leadership, the Department of Justice (DOJ) has made efforts to reinforce federal nondiscrimination protections nationwide¹. We urge you to outline the steps the Department is taking to counter anti-transgender threats of violence occurring online and in person and to provide further guidance to health care providers on how to protect their staff and patients from such threats.

Earlier this year, a woman was indicted for making a hoax bomb threat against Boston Children's Hospital and its employees after false claims of child abuse were spread against the hospital by extremist groups on social media. Several online accounts have leveled unsubstantiated accusations against other children's hospitals to millions of followers, claiming that these health care providers are abusing minors as part of a political agenda. Other institutions which have also been targeted by various online groups and which have been forced to take enhanced security measures to protect their staff and patients in light of increased threats include: the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, the Children's National Hospital in Washington, D.C., the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, and the Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

In response to these threats, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Medical Association (AMA), and the Children's Hospital Association (CHA) recently sent a joint letter to DOJ urging investigations into entities coordinating and provoking these threats against children's hospitals². These organizations cite the difficulties and dangers that these targeted

¹ Office of Public Affairs. "Justice Department Reinforces Federal Nondiscrimination Obligations in Letter to State Officials Regarding Transgender Youth." *United States Department of Justice*, 31 Mar. 2022, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-reinforces-federal-nondiscrimination-obligations-letter-state-officials>.

² Gutman, Abraham. "Major Medical Groups Want the Feds to Investigate Threats against Chop and Other Hospitals That Care for Trans Youth." *https://www.inquirer.com*, The Philadelphia Inquirer, 5 Oct. 2022,

threats present to federally protected rights to patients' health care. We request that you thoroughly consider the concerns laid out by the AAP, AMA, and CHA as the DOJ implements policies to counter these threats, and that you provide a swift response to these organizations.

Online posts by social media accounts spreading disinformation about transgender and nonbinary individuals have spurred real life consequences for health care providers throughout the country and for their patients. When popular accounts share unfounded and hurtful claims about these institutions, millions of followers are instigated to send hostile messages and threaten hospital staff. Patients may suffer from a lack of critical care access as hospitals must focus on threats of violence over caring for those in need. Furthermore, LGBTQ+ and gender nonconforming youth may fear seeking medical care or may be discouraged from coming out due to the spread of violent propaganda about them.

Host platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Shopify, and others have been slow to act to limit the spread of threats and harmful misinformation from these accounts, and many other online platforms continue to profit off these accounts through ad support and by offering platforms to sell merchandise³. It is important that financial incentive for private companies does not outweigh their responsibility to prevent content that encourages targeted violence from being widely disseminated.

In light of these events, we request responses from your office on the following questions:

- What steps is the DOJ taking to improve safety for children's hospitals throughout the country and hold accountable those who unlawfully threaten, harass, or otherwise put in harm's way the staff and patients at these facilities?
- How is the DOJ working with all relevant agencies, including at the state or local level, to monitor online calls for anti-trans violence and to hold accountable any platforms which host content that promotes violence?
- Will the DOJ consult with trans-led organizations to determine best practices for helping transgender, nonbinary, and gender nonconforming individuals targeted by these threats, and to ensure that their communities' needs are met through the Administration's plan of action?
- How is the DOJ coordinating with other agencies, including the Department of Health and Human Services, to safeguard America from further threats against children's hospitals or any institution targeted specifically due to associations, real or perceived, with LGBTQ+ individuals?

<https://www.inquirer.com/news/transgender-youth-children-hospital-threats-merrick-garland-20221005.html>.

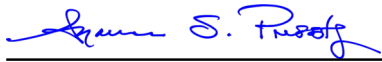
³ Carter, Camden. "Shopify Is Allowing Anti-LGBTQ 'Libs of TikTok' to Sell Merchandise on Its Platform." *Media Matters for America*, 22 July 2022, <https://www.mediamatters.org/libs-tiktok/shopify-allowing-anti-lgbtq-lib-tiktok-sell-merchandise-its-platform>.

We look forward to continuing to work with the Department to ensure safe conditions for all of America's doctors and related medical staff, patients, LGBTQ+ youth, and their loved ones, and we appreciate a timely response.

Sincerely,



Dwight Evans
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



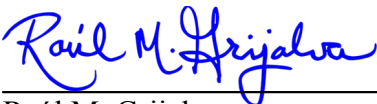
Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



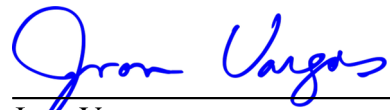
Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress



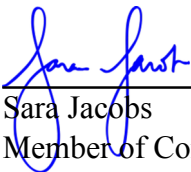
Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



Juan Vargas
Member of Congress



Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress



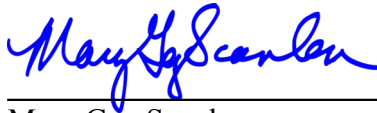
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Member of Congress



Lori Trahan
Member of Congress



Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress



Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress



Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress



Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



Nikema Williams
Member of Congress



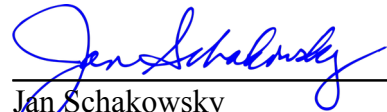
Marie Newman
Member of Congress



Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress



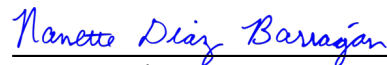
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress



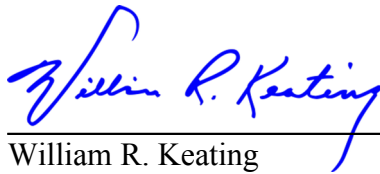
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress



William R. Keating
Member of Congress



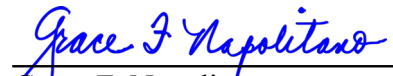
Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



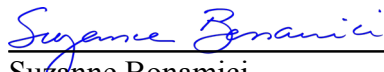
Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



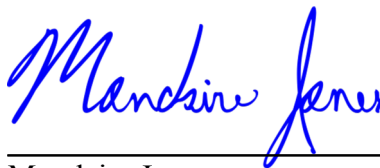
André Carson
Member of Congress



Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Mondaire Jones
Member of Congress



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

CC: Xavier Becerra, Secretary of Health and Human Services