March 21, 2013

Advisory Policy Board Members
U.S. Department of Justice
c/o R. Scott Trent
CJIS Designated Federal Officer
Criminal Justice Information Services Division
Federal Bureau of Investigation
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20535-0001

Dear Members of the Advisory Policy Board:

We would like to respectfully express our strong support for adding three new categories to the FBI’s Hate Crime Statistics Act (HCSA) data collection mandate -- anti-Sikh, anti-Hindu and anti-Arab hate crimes. Unfortunately, there is a specific, demonstrated need for hate crime data for each of these three categories.

We are in favor of such a move in part because many Congressional offices have heard from constituents and leaders in the Sikh, Hindu and Arab-American communities about their ongoing fear of being the victim of a hate crime. This fear is a result of demonstrable and specific violent threats and attacks. For example, a man attempted to firebomb a Hindu Temple in New York on New Year’s Day, 2012. In December 2012, a Hindu man whose attacker said she hated Hindus and Muslims was shoved in front of an oncoming subway train, resulting in his death. Even before the horrific massacre at the Sikh Temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin in August 2012 that took the lives of six worshippers, two Sikh men in Sacramento were killed and another in New York was brutally attacked.

We are also deeply concerned about this issue because attacks and threats against Sikhs, Hindus and Arabs appear to be aimed in part at our nation’s youth. For instance, in one major urban area, a shocking three out of four turbaned Sikh boys reported being harassed and bullied in schools because of their appearance and Sikh identity.

We understand that, at present, the FBI does not collect specific information about these categories of hate violence, which may at times be recorded as anti-Muslim bias motivation. However, evidence suggests that all too many crimes are committed against these groups because of their religious or national identity, and not because they are confused with Muslims.

Given the scale of the problem and that these discrete communities are so acutely susceptible to hate violence in the United States, we urge the Advisory Board to support adding these three categories to the existing HCSA data collection mandate for federal, state and local law enforcement agencies. We also believe that doing so will encourage affected community
members to report hate crimes to law enforcement officials and strengthen relationships between communities, local and state law enforcement, the FBI and the Department of Justice.

Thank you for your careful consideration of these issues.

Sincerely,

Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress

Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress

Tulsi Gabbard
Member of Congress

Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress

Michael M. Honda
Member of Congress

Adam B. Schiff
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Gary C. Peters
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Judy Chu
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Ami Bera
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John Conyers, Jr.
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Julia Brownley
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Paul Tonko
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern
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Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr
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John Garamendi
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Jerry McNerney
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Pedro R. Pierluisi
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Carolyn Maloney
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Tammy Duckworth
Member of Congress

Adam Smith
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Peter Welch
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Keith Ellison
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Richard E. Neal
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Luis V. Gutiérrez  
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Madeline Z. Bordallo  
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Sheila Jackson Lee  
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