

December 14, 2022

The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney  
Chair  
House Committee on Oversight and Reform  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James R. Comer  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Oversight and Reform  
Washington, D.C. 20015

Dear Chair Maloney and Ranking Member Comer,

On behalf of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), we write to provide our insights for today's hearing on "The Rise of Anti-LGBTQI+ Extremism and Violence in the United States." We appreciate the opportunity to share our expertise documenting anti-LGBTQI+ extremism and violence, to offer critical perspective on the history and recent trends in anti-LGBTQI+ extremism and violence, and to offer several practical policy recommendations to address this threat to lives, communities, and our democracy. We respectfully request this statement be included as part of the official hearing record.

Established in 1971, the SPLC has been tireless in identifying and rooting out extremist groups to create a fair, inclusive, and unified nation. We are a nonprofit advocacy organization serving as a catalyst for racial justice throughout the South. We work in partnership with communities of color to dismantle white supremacy, strengthen intersectional movements through transformative policies and initiatives, and advance human rights of all people. We have deep expertise in monitoring the activities of domestic hate groups and other extremists – including the Ku Klux Klan, the neo-Nazi movement, racist skinheads, anti-LGBTQ groups, anti-Muslim groups, antigovernment militias, and others. We currently track and expose hundreds of extremist groups operating across the country and publish investigative reports, share key intelligence, and offer expert analysis to the media and public to help prevent and counter the impact of hate.

This hearing comes at a crucial time for LGBTQI+ people in the United States. LGBTQI+ people already disproportionately experience violent victimization.<sup>1</sup> Yet, LGBTQI+ people are being targeted by coordinated efforts between right-wing extremist groups and some Republican politicians to spread and normalize misinformed, conspiratorial, and violent rhetoric. In 2022, these efforts have been successful in stirring anti-LGBTQI+ sentiment, increasing the likelihood of violent anti-LGBTQI+ attacks, and producing a hostile social and political environment for the most vulnerable LGBTQI+ people in the country.

### **SPLC Monitoring: Recent Trends in Anti-LGBTQI+ Extremism and Violence**

Less than one month, ago in the early hours of the 2022 Transgender Day of Remembrance, Raymond Green Vance, Kelly Loving, Daniel Aston, Derrick Rump, and Ashley Paugh were shot and killed because they happened to be in an LGBTQI+ nightclub in Colorado Springs, Colorado called

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew R. Flores, Lynn Langton, Ilan H. Meyer, and Adam P. Romero. (October 2, 2020). "Victimization rates and traits of sexual and gender minorities in the United States: Results from the National Crime Victimization Survey, 2017." *Science Advances* 6(40): <https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aba6910>.

*Club Q*.<sup>2</sup> This attack and the dozens<sup>3</sup> of other violent attacks targeting LGBTQI+ people in the United States in 2022 come as hate groups and extremist movements are emboldened by the seeming ‘mainstreaming’ of anti-LGBTQI+ sentiment by too many Republican politicians.<sup>4</sup> While a growing proportion of Americans support LGBTQI+ civil rights, and welcome<sup>5</sup> LGBTQI+ people in their families, schools, places of worship, and communities, provocation of anti-LGBTQI+ extremism and violence has again become a right-wing tactic to sow division and impose distrust and terror within our communities as part of an attempt to retain political power at all costs.

In the past two years, an unprecedented amount of anti-LGBTQI+ legislation has been introduced and adopted<sup>6</sup> at the state level targeting LGBTQI+ families and children for harassment by the state,<sup>7</sup> depriving fundamental rights to speech and assembly,<sup>8</sup> and even limiting participation in America’s democratic institutions by restricting voting access.<sup>9</sup> Along with these legislative attacks on LGBTQI+ freedoms and the violent attacks on LGBTQI+ spaces like nightclubs and Pride events, extremist groups like the Proud Boys and Patriot Front – some of whom were allegedly instrumental in the deadly January 6 insurrection – are also targeting the institutions of American civil society like schools, libraries, and children’s hospitals in an effort to drive LGBTQI+ people out of American society.<sup>10</sup> Since 2019, the number of anti-LGBTQI+ hate groups increased by more than 40% over the previous year.<sup>11</sup> SPLC continues to monitor a significant number of anti-LGBTQI+ hate groups and their activities each year.

### **Anti-LGBTQI+ Extremism and Violence is a Consistent Feature of American Culture and History**

While this hearing is focused on the “rise” of anti-LGBTQI+ extremism and violence in the United States, it should be noted that animus toward LGBTQI+ Americans, including heterosexism or the assumption that heterosexuality is the only ‘normal’ sexual orientation and cisnormativity or the assumption that all people are cisgender, meaning their gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth,<sup>12</sup> have been fundamental organizing features of American society and politics for

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<sup>2</sup> Don Clyde and Juliana Kim. (November 20, 2022). “Two patrons confronted the man who opened fire at an LGBTQ club in Colorado Springs.” *NPR*.

<https://www.npr.org/2022/11/20/1138045219/colorado-springs-shooting-lgbtq-club-q-5-dead>

<sup>3</sup> Mary Emily O’Hara. (November 22, 2022). “GLAAD Report: Drag events faced at least 124 protests and significant threats in 2022.” *GLAAD*. <https://www.glaad.org/blog/glaad-report-drag-events-faced-least-124-protests-and-significant-threats-2022>

<sup>4</sup> Helen Santoro. (December 12, 2022). “How Anti-LGBTQ+ Rhetoric Fuels Violence.” *Scientific American* <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-anti-lgbtq-rhetoric-fuels-violence/>.

<sup>5</sup> Public Religion Research Institute. (March 17, 2022). “50-State Survey: More Americans Than Ever (Eight in Ten) Support LGBTQ Discrimination Protection Laws, Even as Legislative Efforts Opposing Them Proliferate.” <https://www.prrri.org/press-release/50-state-survey-more-americans-than-ever-eight-in-ten-support-lgbtq-discrimination-protection-laws-even-as-legislative-efforts-opposing-them-proliferate/?src=newsroom>

<sup>6</sup> American Civil Liberties Union. (December 2, 2022). “Legislation Affecting LGBTQ Rights Across the Country.” <https://www.aclu.org/legislation-affecting-lgbtq-rights-across-country>.

<sup>7</sup> Sneha Dey and Karen Brooks Harper. (February 28, 2022). “Transgender Texas Kids are Terrified after Governor orders that Parents be Investigated for Child Abuse.” *The Texas Tribune*. <https://www.texastribune.org/2022/02/28/texas-transgender-child-abuse/>.

<sup>8</sup> Jaclyn Diaz. “Florida’s Governor Signs Controversial Law Opponents Dubbed ‘Don’t Say Gay’.” (March 28, 2022). *NPR*. <https://www.npr.org/2022/03/28/1089221657/dont-say-gay-florida-desantis>.

<sup>9</sup> Kathryn K. O’Neill, Nathan Cisneros, Will Tentindo, and Jody L. Herman. (September 2022). “The Potential Impact of Voter Identification Laws on Transgender Voters in the 2022 General Election.” <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/trans-voter-id-impact/>.

<sup>10</sup> Cassie Miller. (July 13, 2022). “Proud Boys Aid the Right-Wing Assault on the LGBTQ Community and Reproductive Justice.” *Southern Poverty Law Center*. <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2022/07/13/proud-boys-aid-right-wing-assault-lgbtq-community-and-reproductive-justice>.

<sup>11</sup> Southern Poverty Law Center. (March 18, 2020). “The Year in Hate and Extremism 2019.” <https://www.splcenter.org/news/2020/03/18/year-hate-and-extremism-2019>.

<sup>12</sup> Anti-Defamation League. (May 3, 2022). “What is heterosexim and what can I do about it?” <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/what-is-heterosexism-and-what-can-i-do-about-it>.

much longer. From the earliest days of our republic, states and the federal government have attempted to regulate sexuality and gender in ways that maintain heterosexual and cisgender status as privileged while seeking to change or erase LGBTQI+ people.<sup>13</sup> Social and political institutions established on heterosexism and cisnormativity reflect the violent imposition of social and cultural norms which constrain the bodies and limit the development of LGBTQI+ people.<sup>14</sup>

Throughout American history, LGBTQI+ people have been dehumanized simply for not conforming to heterosexual and cisgender conventions. LGBTQI+ people have faced social stigmatization, family rejection, job and housing discrimination, barriers to accessing healthcare and the legal system.<sup>15</sup> The long debate over the rights of LGBTQI+ people and the hostility of the American political system has also invited polarization and contributed to the development of extremist anti-LGBTQI+ ideologies. It also perpetuates a society in which violence is accepted as a way to police non-conformity to heterosexuality and cisgender expression.

It is within this larger context of cisgender and heterosexual supremacy that the current “rise” in anti-LGBTQI+ extremism and violence is being experienced. Data reflects the disproportionate impact of violence on LGBTQI+ people in the United States. For example, in a recent analysis of the National Crime Victimization Survey, researchers from the Williams Institute found lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people are 4 times as likely to experience violent victimization in the United States than non-LGBT people.<sup>16</sup> Meta analyses of similar research on LGBTQI+ victimization reach the same conclusion, that LGBTQI+ people are at a higher risk for violent victimization than their peers.<sup>17</sup>

In addition, research by the advocacy group GLSEN demonstrates that LGBTQI+ young people are more likely to experience violence and victimization in schools than non-LGBTQI+ young people.<sup>18</sup> Experiences of LGBTQI+ people in other state institutions, including U.S. prisons and jails, show similar patterns of violent victimization. According to data from the National Inmate Survey, one-in-ten sexual minority inmates in U.S. prisons and jails report being sexually victimized by another inmate while sexual minority inmates are about twice as likely to report being sexually victimized by prison or jail staff.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, although research centering the experiences of transgender and gender non-conforming people is not as widely available as research centering the experiences of sexual minorities, the data that do exist demonstrate violence against transgender and gender non-conforming people is especially severe in the United States. The current climate of harm is best described as an “epidemic” by the Human Rights Campaign.<sup>20</sup> In fact, in the days before this

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<sup>13</sup> Margot Canaday. (2009). *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America*. Princeton University Press. <https://press.princeton.edu/books/paperback/9780691149936/the-straight-state>.

<sup>14</sup> C. Riley Snorton. (2017). *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

<sup>15</sup> Human Rights Campaign Foundation. (October 2021). “Dismantling a Culture of Violence.” <https://reports.hrc.org/dismantling-a-culture-of-violence>.

<sup>16</sup> Flores, et al. (2020).

<sup>17</sup> Tasseli McKay, Shilpi Misra, and Christine Lindquist. (March 2017). “Violence and LGBTQ+ Communities: what we know, and what do we need to know?” *RTI International*. <https://www.rti.org/lgbtq>.

<sup>18</sup> Neal A. Palmer and Emily A. Greytak. (May 17, 2017). “LGBTQ Student Victimization and its Relationship to School Discipline and Justice System Involvement.” *Criminal Justice Review* 42(2): <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734016817704698>.

<sup>19</sup> Ilan H. Meyer, Andrew R. Flores, Lara Stemple, Adam P. Romero, Bianca D.M. Wilson, and Jody L. Herman. (February 2017). “Incarceration Rates and Traits of Sexual Minorities in the United States: National Inmate Survey, 2011-2012.” *American Journal of Public Health* 107(2):267-273.

<sup>20</sup> Human Rights Campaign. (December 5, 2022). “An Epidemic of Violence 2022.” <https://reports.hrc.org/an-epidemic-of-violence-2022>.

hearing, Diamond Jackson-McDonald was killed in Philadelphia, PA.<sup>21</sup> Jackson-McDonald was at least the 35<sup>th</sup> transgender person killed in 2022.

As the SPLC has pointed out, however, data about anti-LGBTQI+ violence – and all hate crimes – is woefully incomplete.<sup>22</sup> Several factors contribute to this problem. First, crime statistics involving LGBTQI+ people are likely undercounted due to improper reporting. Specifically related to hate crimes, SPLC research shows “more than a third of the nation’s 18,000 federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies failed to report any hate crime data to the FBI in 2021 – 3,300 fewer than in 2020.”<sup>23</sup> Second, because systemic oppression means it is not safe for all LGBTQI+ people to live openly, those who are not already ‘out’ may not want to report a crime related to their sexual orientation or gender identity for fear of further stigmatization. Finally, LGBTQI+ people and people living with HIV or AIDS are more likely to experience violence and victimization by law enforcement in the United States – often through profiling and harassment.<sup>24</sup>

LGBTQI+ young people are similarly more likely to experience victimization by authority figures in their schools.<sup>25</sup> The combination of victimization by law enforcement, other authority figures, and improper reporting of bias crimes affecting LGBTQI+ people make it difficult to know the full scope of the violence LGBTQI+ people experience. Yet, groups like SPLC and our partners are monitoring anti-LGBTQI+ extremism and documenting its impacts.

Although attitudes toward LGBTQI+ people are improving, those who oppose LGBTQI+ equality maintain control of many of the social and political institutions in the United States and use their institutional control to target LGBTQI+ people for sanction through public policy and further agitate anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment for political gain.<sup>26</sup> Given this history of systemic cisnormativity and heterosexism, it is unfortunately not surprising that LGBTQI+ people frequently become the focus of “moral panics” and “culture wars” as is currently the case. These cycles of violence and oppression not only jeopardize the lives, livelihoods, and rights of LGBTQI+ people, they also fuel extremist ideologies.

### **Anti-LGBTQI+ Extremism and Violence Suppresses Democracy and the Development of Civil Society**

Extremism and violence against LGBTQI+ people are anti-democratic and antithetical to the values of a successful multiracial democracy. The suppression of pluralism inherent to the anti-LGBTQI+ movement reflects a common belief among many hate groups monitored by SPLC. Namely, hate group purveyors of anti-LGBTQI+ rhetoric that promotes the belief that the country should solely reflect the ideas and identities of heterosexual, white, cisgender, Christian men are advocating for a more exclusive and narrow definition of whom is welcome and has legal rights. In addition, this activity is often founded on a denial of the separation of church and state. To these groups, political violence to intimidate others and maintain power can be justified.<sup>27,28</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Human Rights Campaign. (December 6, 2022). “HRC Honors the Life of Diamond Jackson-McDonald, Black Transgender Woman Killed in Philadelphia.” <https://www.hrc.org/news/hrc-honors-the-life-of-diamond-jackson-mcdonald-black-transgender-woman-killed-in-philadelphia>.

<sup>22</sup> Southern Poverty Law Center. (December 12, 2022). “SPLC: 2021 FBI Hate Crime Report Cannot be Trusted.” <https://www.splcenter.org/presscenter/splc-2021-fbi-hate-crime-report-cannot-be-trusted>.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> Ari Shaw. (March 2020). “Violence and Law Enforcement Interactions with LGBT People in the US.” *Williams Institute*. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/violence-law-lgbt-us/>.

<sup>25</sup> Palmer and Greytak (2017).

<sup>26</sup> Santoro (2022).

<sup>27</sup> Philip S. Gorski and Samuel L. Perry. (2022). *The Flag and the Cross: White Christian nationalism and the threat to American Democracy*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>28</sup> Nathan P. Kalmoe and Lilliana Mason. (2022). *Radical American Partisanship: Mapping violent hostility, its causes and the consequences for democracy*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Similar ideas that fueled the political violence during the January 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol also animate the anti-LGBTQI+ movement in the United States. In fact, some of the personalities and groups associated with the January 6 insurrection are also well-known for their anti-LGBTQI+ extremism. According to SPLC research, in 2022, the group Proud Boys frequently targeted LGBTQI+ people for campaigns of harassment and intimidation. Notably, “more than 40 members of [Proud Boys] face charges related to their alleged activities on January 6, including charges of seditious conspiracy brought against their former chairman and several other leaders.” According to SPLC research, “their ranks swelled to 72 chapters in 2021, up from 43 in 2020.”<sup>29</sup> The board chair of the National Organization for Marriage, one of the most politically active groups working to counter LGBTQI+ efforts for equal rights, John Eastman, reportedly authored a legal blueprint for keeping Donald Trump in office even after losing the 2020 presidential election.

As the SPLC documented in the first six months of 2022, “the Proud Boys counterprotested or harassed people on at least 28 separate occasions at LGBTQ and reproductive justice events around the country. In June alone, members of the Proud Boys gathered to protest or harass attendees at 14 different LGBTQ and reproductive justice-oriented events.”<sup>30</sup> Like the violence during the January 6 insurrection, violence against LGBTQI+ people is a symptom of political extremism and is stoked by similar personalities and groups who attempted to overturn the 2020 presidential election.

SPLC has also identified a pattern of social media use that targets LGBTQI+ people, events, and even American civil institutions like schools and hospitals just for being who they are.

### **Organized Campaigns Using Social Media**

In June of 2022, SPLC documented how right-wing social media influencers repeatedly drew negative attention to the Pride event in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, setting the stage for members of the white nationalist hate group Patriot Front to target it.<sup>31</sup> Specifically, SPLC highlighted how “social media performers flag targets to their right-wing audiences” and then extremist groups mobilize in response. As SPLC noted this practice is consistent with previous mobilization efforts of extremist groups including during the January 6 insurrection when “Twitter influencers, including some high-profile hate figures, hyped election-related disinformation in the runup to the attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, setting the stage for what became an insurrection attempt.”<sup>32</sup>

In addition to these activities, anti-LGBTQI+ hate groups have targeted hospitals and schools, key social institutions that educate and protect everyone in their communities. The impetus for these attacks is the fallacious notion often spread through social media campaigns that specific hospitals or doctors are attempting to harm children. Specifically, SPLC identified a pattern of behavior by the well-known social media account called “Libs of TikTok.” Posts from the account, administered by Chaya Raichik, “frequently contain false information as Raichik has previously presented fake curriculum materials as if they were real and presented covert recordings of uninformed responses from non-medical hospital staff as if they represented treatment policies at the facility.”<sup>33</sup>

An analysis of account content published by SPLC after the Club Q mass shooting, noted a “typical operating procedure” which involves “spotlighting LGBTQ users of the platform TikTok, especially

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<sup>29</sup> Miller (2022).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Michael Edison Hayden. (June 14, 2022). “Far-Right Influencers Hyped Coeur d’Alene Pride Before Patriot Front Showed Up.” <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2022/06/14/far-right-influencers-hyped-coeur-dalene-pride-patriot-front-showed>.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Jason Wilson. (November 22, 2022). “Colorado Springs: Far-Right Influencers Made LGBTQ People into Targets.” <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2022/11/22/colorado-springs-far-right-influencers-made-lgbtq-people-targets>.

trans people, and targeting them individually for mockery and abuse and posting transphobic and homophobic messages on platforms including Twitter, Facebook, Substack, and Gab.”<sup>34</sup> Following similar strategies, accounts like Raichik’s have “helped popularize the anti-LGBTQ slur, “groomer,” which falsely equates non-heterosexual sexualities and non-cisgender gender identities with pedophilia.”<sup>35</sup>

These false online narratives fuel additional violence against LGBTQI+ people as well as legislative efforts to restrict LGBTQI+ civil rights and use public policy to target LGBTQI+ families and LGBTQI+ children for sanction. Notably, the Human Rights Campaign counted 2021 the “worst year” in recent legislative history for LGBTQI+ rights;<sup>36</sup> while in 2022, twenty-three states introduced legislation that would negatively affect LGBTQI+ people.<sup>37</sup> In addition, misinformation and disinformation about LGBTQI+ people is often amplified by right-wing politicians<sup>38</sup> and political campaigns.<sup>39</sup> The misinformation campaigns are laced with violent threats and in some cases the threats are by politicians who use misinformation about LGBTQI+ people to justify legislative and legal attacks.<sup>40</sup>

### **Anti-LGBTQI+ Extremism and Violence Supports Other Extremist and Violent Ideologies**

Anti-LGBTQI+ extremism and violence are not perpetuated in a social or cultural vacuum. That is, anti-LGBTQI+ extremism and violence occur along with and support other forms of systemic oppression including white supremacy, male supremacy, and white Christian nationalism. This can mean that extremist groups are motivated simultaneously by heterosexism, cisnormativity and racism. For example, similar rhetoric observed by SPLC related to the online targeting of LGBTQI+ people is used in posts that disparage and attack people of color. Notably, SPLC found anti-LGBTQI+ social media account Libs of TikTok “taking pains to deny the existence of systemic racism” and directing “outrage towards schools offering racially inclusive curriculums.”<sup>41</sup> SPLC has also documented how, in 2022, Proud Boys targeted both LGBTQI+ and reproductive justice events, demonstrating the shared goals of control over peoples’ bodies that underlay the anti-LGBTQI+ and male supremacy movements.<sup>42</sup>

The intersections of extremism and violence also mean those who live at the intersections of marginalized identities – like LGBTQI+ people of color – are more likely to be victimized by extremists. This means that violent heterosexism and racism (among other forms of intersecting systemic oppression) can be experienced simultaneously.<sup>43</sup> The systemic nature of each form of oppression, in this case racism and heterosexism, mean even in a world where attitudes toward LGBTQI+ people may be improving, not all LGBTQI+ people will experience the positive effects of changing attitudes. Instead, because multiple forms of oppression can be experienced

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Wyatt Ronan. (April 22, 2021). “2021 Slated to become worst year for LGBTQ State legislative attacks as unprecedented number of states poised to enact record-shattering number of anti-LGBTQ measures into law.” *Human Rights Campaign*. <https://www.hrc.org/press-releases/2021-slanted-to-become-worst-year-for-lgbtq-state-legislative-attacks>.

<sup>37</sup> Human Rights Campaign. (n.d.) “Anti-LGBTQ+ Bills in 2022.” <https://www.hrc.org/resources/state-maps/anti-lgbtq-bills-in-2021>.

<sup>38</sup> Orion Rummier. (November 3, 2022). “Republicans in midterm races are embracing anti-trans rhetoric like never before.” *The 19th*. <https://19thnews.org/2022/11/election-transgender-rhetoric-gop-campaign-ads/>.

<sup>39</sup> Human Rights Campaign. (October 22, 2022). “Pro LGBTQ+ Organizations Slam Dangerous, False Advertisements that Harm Transgender Children.” <https://www.hrc.org/press-releases/pro-lgbtq-organizations-slam-dangerous-false-advertisements-that-harm-transgender-children>.

<sup>40</sup> Phil Reese. (January 17, 2012). “Tenn. Bathroom bill sponsor: ‘I would stomp a mudhole’ in a trans person.” *Washington Blade*. <https://www.washingtonblade.com/2012/01/17/tenn-bathroom-bill-sponsor-i-would-stomp-a-mudhole-in-a-trans-person/>.

<sup>41</sup> Wilson (2022).

<sup>42</sup> Miller (2022).

<sup>43</sup> Lisa Bowleg. (April 4, 2012). “Once You’ve Blended the Cake, You Can’t Take the Parts Back to the Main Ingredients”: Black Gay and Bisexual Men’s Descriptions and Experiences of Intersectionality.” *Sex Roles* 68(754-767). <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11199-012-0152-4>.

simultaneously, the effects of anti-LGBTQI+ extremism and violence cannot be understood nor combatted without also understanding the effects of and combatting white supremacy, male supremacy, ableism, and Christian nationalism – among other hateful ideologies.

We very much hope these hearings will spark congressional and federal agency action to help address ongoing systemic oppression of LGBTQI+ people, as well as other long-term investments and initiatives that will move our nation closer to fulfilling its highest ideals and promise of equality.

## **Policy Recommendations**

### Speak out against hate, political violence, and extremism

Words matter, especially from our leaders. It is impossible to overstate the importance of elected officials, business leaders, and community leaders using their public platforms to condemn hate crimes, threats, and violence against LGBTQI+ people. Anti-LGBTQI+ extremism and violence is linked with, supports, and is supported by other forms of systemic oppression. It is essential for elected officials, business leaders, and community leaders to condemn hate crimes, threats, and violence against all marginalized groups, as well as attacks on the civil institutions and democratic rights of marginalized people.

### Expand data collection efforts

Data drives policy. Collecting information about the lived experiences of LGBTQI+ people in the United States – and targeted violence directed against these communities – is paramount to fully understanding the scope and impact of anti-LGBTQI+ extremism and violence.

- The Biden administration and Congress should support expanded data collection efforts – voluntary information, including sexual orientation and gender identity, which will better inform federal health, education, justice, housing, and welfare policy responses.
- The Biden administration and Congress should support mandatory hate crime reporting by all law enforcement agencies to the FBI. Until legislation requiring reporting can be enacted, the federal funds to law enforcement agencies should be conditioned on credible hate crime reporting or meaningful community hate crime public education and awareness initiatives, including the adoption of internal agency policies and procedures to improve hate crime reporting, prevention, and response.

### Enact the Equality Act

Currently, almost half of all LGBTQI+ people in the United States live in a state where it is legal to discriminate in public accommodations or housing based on one's sexual orientation or gender identity.

- Congress should adopt the Equality Act to provide federal civil rights protections to all LGBTQI+ people no matter where they live.

### Expand education and prevention initiatives

- The Department of Education and the Department of Justice should fund programs aimed at preventing extremism and promoting deradicalization – and move from punishment models to restorative justice initiatives that build community resilience. Especially in these divided and polarized times, every elementary and secondary school should promote an inclusive school climate and activities that celebrate our nation's diversity
- Government should promote anti-bias education programs that help steer individuals away from hate and extremism. We need federal and state government leadership to promote anti-bias, anti-hate, and pro-democracy education programs, such as the SPLC's Learning for

Justice resources,<sup>44</sup> and initiatives to address online hate and radicalization, such as the SPLC/American University Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab (PERIL) Parents & Caregivers Guide to Online Youth Radicalization,<sup>45</sup> in our nation's schools.

- Congress and the Department of Education should fund programs to develop and promote civics education and develop curricula on structural racism, as well as funding for states to implement their own related initiatives.
- Unwarranted attacks on inclusive education and teaching truth and hard history have resulted in bullying of Black, Brown, Indigenous, LGBTQI+ and other students – and harassment of school board members and teachers. Federal and state officials should provide support and funding to communities addressing intimidating and menacing threats of violence against health care workers, school board members, teachers, and school administrators.

Promote online safety and hold tech and social media companies accountable

It is frighteningly simple for racists and extremists to disseminate propaganda, recruit followers, generate profits, and spread intimidation on the major social media platforms. Social media companies should not enable the funding or amplifying of anti-LGBTQI+ extremism and violence or provide a safe haven for extremists.

- Consistent with the First Amendment and privacy considerations, federal and state government officials should implement rules and regulations to ensure that tech companies comply with civil rights laws prohibiting discrimination. Law enforcement should ensure they are enforcing prohibitions on activities that endanger the public or conspire against the rights of others.

Thank you for holding this important hearing. We deeply appreciate this Committee's continued leadership to address anti-LGBTQI+ extremism and violence. We look forward to working with you as you continue to focus on preventing and addressing this threat. If you have questions about this statement or need additional information, please contact Michael Lieberman, SPLC Senior Policy Counsel, at [Michael.Lieberman@splcenter.org](mailto:Michael.Lieberman@splcenter.org).

Sincerely,



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Senior Research Analyst  
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*Susan Corke*

Susan Corke  
Director  
Intelligence Project

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<sup>44</sup> <https://www.learningforjustice.org/>