

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 15, 2022

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE
Washington, DC 20032

The Honorable Christopher A. Wray
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
935 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20535

Dear Secretary Mayorkas and Director Wray:

We write to express our continued concern about the alarming rise in threats against election workers and to request that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) take steps to increase awareness of this disturbing trend among local law enforcement.

According to recently released studies, nearly one in three election workers have reported that they feel unsafe because of their job, approximately one in six have received threats of violence, and nearly one in three know at least one colleague who quit their job out of concern for their safety.¹ The onslaught of threats against election workers is unacceptable and raises serious concerns about state and local governments' ability to recruit and retain election workers needed to administer future elections. In fact, one study released earlier last month found that one in five election officials are unlikely to continue to serve until the 2024 election.²

Federal agencies have taken important steps to address these threats, including the Department of Justice (DOJ) establishing the Election Threats Task Force in coordination with the FBI, but more must be done. It is critical that election workers are familiar with available federal resources and that federal and local law enforcement understand the scope and severity of the threats election officials are facing so that they can respond effectively and promptly.

We have heard that many election workers are not aware of federal resources to help them address these threats, and a study from March 2022 indicated that a majority of election workers are unfamiliar with the Task Force's work.³ Additionally, we have heard that in many cases when election officials report threats, local law enforcement agencies treat them as isolated incidents, instead of as part of a growing nationwide trend.

¹Michael Waldman, *Attacks Against Election Officials are Taking a Toll*, Brennan Center for Justice (March 15, 2022) <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/attacks-against-election-officials-are-taking-toll>; Brennan Center for Justice and Bipartisan Policy Center, *Election Officials are Under Attack*, Policy Report (June 16, 2021) <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/policy-solutions/election-officials-under-attack>

²Derek Tisler and Lawrence Norden, *Estimated Costs for Protecting Election Workers from Threats of Physical Violence*, Brennan Center for Justice (May 3, 2022) <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/estimated-costs-protecting-election-workers-threats-physical-violence>

³Brennan Center for Justice, *Local Election Officials Survey* (March 10, 2022) <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/local-election-officials-survey-march-2022>

Based on our discussions with election officials, we request that DHS and FBI consider issuing a joint Public Service Announcement (PSA) and distributing it to local law enforcement agencies to ensure that they are aware of both the recent increase in these threats against election officials and federal resources for reporting and countering them. A PSA could provide important information, including an overview of the threat landscape, recommendations to mitigate the threat, instructions for reporting threats, and available federal resources – similar to the September 2020 PSA warning that the FBI issued with the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency about cybercriminals and disinformation likely to target election results.⁴ We also ask that DHS’s Office for State and Local Law Enforcement and the FBI consider making similar resources for local law enforcement agencies and field offices available online.

With the 2022 election cycle underway and the November general election quickly approaching, it is vital that election workers and law enforcement at all levels understand the federal support and resources available to them to protect themselves and our democracy. We appreciate the support DHS provides to state and local election officials and the work the FBI has done with DOJ’s Election Threats Task Force, and we look forward to continuing to work with federal agencies to ensure the safety of election officials and workers across the country.

Thank you for your attention to this serious matter.

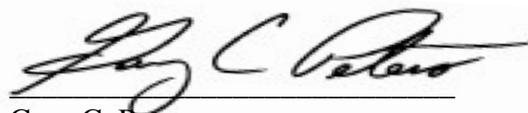
Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar
Chair
Senate Committee on Rules & Administration



Richard J. Durbin
Chair
Senate Judiciary Committee



Gary C. Peters
Chair
Senate Committee on Homeland Security
& Governmental Affairs



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

⁴Federal Bureau of Investigation and Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency, Public Service Announcement, *Foreign Actors and Cybercriminals Likely to Spread Disinformation Regarding 2020 Election Results* (September 22, 2020) <https://www.ic3.gov/Media/Y2020/PSA200922>



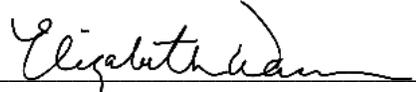
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



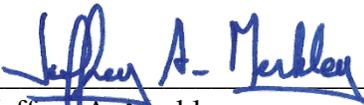
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



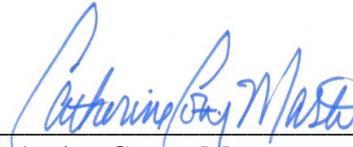
Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
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United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator