

Statement by Senator Susan Collins
Hirono-Collins amendment to the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act

I rise to speak in support of Senate Amendment #1445 that Senator Hirono and I have introduced. I want to begin by thanking my colleague from Hawaii for working with me on this amendment and acknowledge her leadership. I also want to thank Senators Grassley, Blumenthal, Moran, and Warnock for their contributions as well.

M_. President, crimes motivated by bias against race, national origin, or other characteristics simply cannot be tolerated. Our amendment both denounces these acts and marshals additional resources toward addressing and stopping these despicable crimes.

The amendment that the Senator from Hawaii and I are offering today will improve the underlying bill in a number of key ways while it affirms our steadfast commitment to stand with the Asian American and Pacific Islander community against all forms of violence and harassment.

First, our amendment strongly condemns the hate crimes targeting the AAPI community. In the past year, Stop AAPI Hate reported nearly 3,800 cases of anti-Asian discrimination. The Center for the Study of Hate & Extremism found that reporting of anti-Asian hate crimes increased by 145 percent in 16 major cities, even though hate crimes declined in these cities overall. Racially motivated discrimination and violence should never be tolerated. I want to thank Senators Grassley and Warnock for their contributions to this section of our amendment.

Second, the Hirono-Collins amendment directs the Attorney General to assign a point person at the Department of Justice to expedite the review of these hate crimes and requires the Attorney General to issue guidance to state, local, and tribal law enforcement partners about how to address them. Our amendment would also improve data collection and expand public awareness about hate crimes to support victims. With better information, we can help prevent these crimes before they occur and assist law enforcement in bringing the perpetrators to justice.

Third, our amendment incorporates the Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act, authored by Senators Blumenthal and Moran. This bipartisan bill, which I have cosponsored, provides state and local governments and law enforcement agencies with additional tools and resources to understand, identify, and report hate crimes. It provides grants to state and local governments for training and for using the FBI's national hate crimes database; to create reporting hotlines; and to support community engagement around prevention and services for victims. This is important because far too many hate crimes go unreported, and without data, it is difficult to investigate and prosecute them.

Again, let me thank the Senator from Hawaii for her leadership on this amendment. I enjoyed working with her to strengthen and improve the bill, and I urge my colleagues to support it. In doing so, we can send an unmistakably strong signal that crimes targeting Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in our country will not be tolerated.