

Our Alliance Letter Calling for a Congressional Hearing

February 1, 2021

Congressman Jamie Raskin
Chair, Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
House Committee on Oversight and Reform
2242 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Request for Oversight Hearing

Dear Chairman Raskin,

We, the undersigned, would like to respectfully request that the House Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties conduct a hearing to address the racial profiling and investigations of scientists and scholars of Chinese or Asian descent by the Department of Justice, the National Institutes of Health and other science funding agencies based on misguided fears of economic espionage and intellectual property theft. In this increasingly toxic political environment, we are concerned that dedicated scientists and scholars who have devoted their lives to scientific research for the betterment of Americans and humanity at large are being wrongly profiled and as a result, their reputations, careers and lives have suffered. This is causing irreparable damage not only to these individuals but to the American research enterprise at large by dismantling international collaboration—the cornerstone of successful scientific research. While we strongly support efforts to safeguard America’s interests and tax-funded research by prosecuting wrongdoers, it is a grave injustice to target an entire ethnic group or to target scientific collaborations with individuals and institutions from specific countries.

In particular, we are alarmed that our country’s Chinese American scientists and other scientists of Asian and Asian American descent have been caught up in the broad sweep of the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s counterintelligence efforts and the National Institutes of Health’s related actions leaving scientists fearful, confused, and frustrated. For years, international scientific collaborations and exchanges between United States and foreign academic and research institutions have been strongly encouraged and supported by the NIH and other academic entities, but now, they are being criminalized. Overzealous, broad, unchecked, overreaching scrutiny can not only lead to mistakes in investigations or prosecutions, thereby ruining the lives of innocent Americans and their families, but also crippling America’s ability to advance scientific and medical innovations that can save lives, especially during this Covid-19 pandemic.

American science is international and America’s best interests are served by supporting highly educated, well-trained, and talented scientists and engineers who are patriots dedicated to advancing science and innovation in our country. The work being done in American research labs, big corporations, and federal agencies all depend on attracting talent, international partnerships and global corporations. And all Americans benefit from advances in medicine, science, and technology. These advances are fueled by the expertise and hard work of scientists around the world who conduct their research in the U.S. and collaborate with scientists in the United States. We cannot continue to be a leader in science and technology if we promote xenophobia and racial profiling within our own borders.

To date, Congress has held numerous hearings focused solely on the espionage threat, and have not addressed the civil rights violations of Chinese Americans who have been wrongly targeted or the long-term consequences and damages to the American research enterprise if this pattern of racial profiling continues.

At this time, scientists, researchers, uniformed service members, federal employees, government contractors, and other Chinese American professionals have reported that their loyalties and their scientific work are being questioned. Chinese Americans are being targeted for criminal investigations because of characteristics that are common to immigrants and advantageous to this country's global competitiveness, including, for example, language skills, knowledge of culture, and family, financial or professional connections to China. In addition, highly skilled Chinese American intelligence analysts and armed services personnel, who were trained at taxpayer expense, are being involuntarily and unfairly separated from federal government employment even as agencies face diversity hiring challenges.

Immigrant communities know all too well the lessons from the incarceration of Japanese Americans, the McCarthy era investigations into Chinese Americans, and the post-9/11 surveillance of Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian Americans. Under the name of national security, the U.S. often turns on its own citizens and declares them to be foreign threats on domestic soil.

To prevent more Chinese Americans and others of Asian and Asian American descent from becoming collateral damage of the federal government's efforts to stop PRC-sponsored espionage, we respectfully request that the Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties call on experts and fact witnesses to testify to the following matters:

1. The nature and extent of the above-described disparate impact on Chinese Americans;
2. The contributing role of federal government agencies such as NIH, FBI, Justice Department; and other agencies; and
3. Proposed legislation, policies, or other actions to increase transparency, oversight and accountability of federal agencies, the protection of the civil rights and civil liberties of Chinese Americans, and remedies for wronged individuals.

Chinese Americans have a long, storied history in the U.S since they arrived in the 1815. Comprising 23% of the Asian American population,¹ they have made significant economic, social and scientific contributions to the U.S., ranging from military service since the Civil War to health care service during the pandemic. Scientists and researchers are making breakthroughs in covid-19-related research and they are filling critical shortages in national labs.

Immigrants are not a threat. Rather they are a part of the solution to the United States' global challenges. To prevent further injustices from being perpetrated against these loyal and dedicated scientists and the impediment of America's capability to be the global leader in science and technology, we respectfully request that you commence a House Subcommittee Hearing on this timely and urgent issue. Thank you.

The undersigned.

¹ Pew Research Center, "Key facts about Asian origin groups in the U.S." <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/05/22/key-facts-about-asian-origin-groups-in-the-u-s/>

List of Signatories for the Alliance Letter

Organizations:

1990 Institute

80-20 Education Foundation

American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology

APA Justice Task Force

Asian American Advancing Justice | Asian American Justice Center

Asian American Bar Association of Houston

Asian Pacific Islander American Public Affairs Association

Asian American Unity Coalition

Council of Chinese American Deans and Presidents

International Organization of Chinese Physicists and Astronomers

Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

Maryland Legislative Asian American and Pacific Islander Caucus, Maryland General Assembly

Maryland School of Medicine and Co-Founder of the Global Virus Network

Muslim Advocates

National Urban League

OCA Advocates

Society of Chinese Bioscientists in America

United Chinese Americans (UCA)

Individuals: *(titles and associations for identification purposes only)*

Delegate Kumar Barve – Chair, Environmental and Transportation Committee, Maryland House of Delegates

Delegate Mark Chang – Maryland House of Delegates

Delegate Wanika Fisher – Maryland House of Delegates

Senator Clarence Lam – Maryland State Senate

Senator Susan C. Lee – Senate Majority Whip, Maryland State Senate

Delegate David Moon – Maryland House of Delegates

Delegate Lily Qi – Maryland House of Delegates

Delegate Kris Valderrama – Chair, Maryland Legislative Asian American & Pacific Islander (AAPI) Caucus

Dr. Gordon H. Chang - Senior Associate Vice Provost, Stanford University

Sherry Chen - Hydrologist, U.S. National Weather Service

Dr. Shu Chien - Professor Emeritus, University of California, San Diego

Dr. Paul Chu - Professor, Former President of The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Dr. Steven Chu - Nobel Laureate and Former Secretary of the US Department of Energy

Dr. Da Hsuan Feng - Former Vice President for Research, the University of Texas at Dallas

Dr. Robert Gallo - Co-Founder and Director of the Institute of Human Virology at the University of Maryland School of Medicine

Dr. Wen-Biao Gan - New York University School of Medicine

Jonathan Greenblatt, Anti-Defamation League

Dr. Alexander Greer - Professor of Chemistry, Brooklyn College

Dr. Edward Hurlock

Mark H. Kaplan MD - Professor Emeritus, Division of Infectious Disease, Department of Medicine
University of Michigan Health System

Clarence Kwan – Former Chair, Committee of 100 and Retired Deloitte Partner

Dr. Neal Lane – Former White House Science Advisor and Former Director of National Science Foundation

Bel Leong-Hong

Margaret Lewis Esq. - Professor of Law, Seton Hall University

Dr. Yi Li, Chair - Department of Mathematics, University of Iowa

Terry Lierman - Co-Chair, Institute of Human Virology at the Schools of Medicine, University of Maryland School of Medicine

Rick Liu, University of Cincinnati

Dr. Yang Liu - CEO, OncoC4, Inc.

Dr. Zi-Kui Liu - Professor of Materials Science and Engineering, Penn State University and Immediate Past President, ASM International

Gary Locke – Former Secretary of US Department of Commerce; US Ambassador to China; Governor of Washington State; Interim President of Bellevue College, and Chair-Elect Committee of 100

Dr. Wallace D. Loh - Professor and Former President, University of Maryland, College Park

Dr. Peter Ma - Richard H. Kingery Endowed Collegiate Professor, University of Michigan

Dr. Peter Michelson - Luke Blossom Professor, School of Humanities and Sciences, Stanford

Aryani Ong, Esq.

Dr. Steven Pei - Professor, University of Houston, leader of APA Justice Task Force

Devang Shah, Board Member, Asian American Inter Community Services

Wei Su - Retired, U.S. Army Scientist

Dr. Jianping Wang - President, Mercer County Community College

Dr. Ling-Chi Wang - Professor Emeritus, Asian American and Asian Diaspora Studies, UC Berkeley

Dr. Leslie E. Wong - President Emeritus, San Francisco State University

Dr. S. David Wu - President, Baruch College

Frank H. Wu, Esq. - President, Queens College

Dr. Jeremy Wu, retired federal official, leader of APA Justice Task Force

Dr. Ning Xi - Chair Professor of Robotics and Animation, The University of Hong Kong

Dr. Jianping Zhu

*Since we closed our sign-up list on January 17th, we have received hundreds of additional signatories from dozens of institutions of higher education and learning. An updated list of those who have joined our alliance will be provided at a later date.

CC: The Honorable Rep. Carolyn B. Maloney, Chair of the House Oversight Full Committee
The Honorable Rep. Zoe Lofgren, Chair of the Committee on House Administration
The Honorable Rep. Judy Chu, Chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus
The Honorable Rep. Kweisi Mfume, Member of the House Oversight Committee