

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

June 9, 2022

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Secretary  
Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Mayorkas,

We write to express concerns about the increasing threat posed by domestic violent extremists (DVEs) as we anticipate a ruling from the Supreme Court defining the future of *Roe v. Wade*. Specifically, a memo from the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Office of Intelligence and Analysis details the potential for a significant increase in domestic threats as a result of the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health* decision which is expected sometime in June before the Court's recess. Given this troubling development and the subsequent DHS report, we implore Department officials to proactively and immediately take action against these threats in a manner that upholds public safety through threat mitigation while preserving privacy and the right to peacefully protest.

In the wake of the draft decision leak last month that would overturn a nearly fifty-year precedent, the number of violent threats online against clinics, advocates, Supreme Court Justices, and government officials increased exponentially. Immediately following the draft leak, online forums were rife with threats to burn down buildings, hurt Supreme Court Justices and their families, and commit violent acts against demonstrators. Given the sensitivity and particular pertinence of threats to abortion rights, DVEs have supercharged the violent side of the debate, especially on social media, with narratives that encourage actors to respond with violence.

We are especially concerned about incendiary language coming from Racially Motivated Violent Extremists (RMVEs) claiming their efforts "save white children" and "fight white genocide."<sup>1</sup> This rhetoric is not only deeply disturbing, but it feeds an already contentious debate with dangerous ideologies in a country fraught with racially-motivated violence. This could lead to a perfect storm for RMVE attacks that threaten communities and public safety.

Unfortunately, the abortion rights debate is not immune to domestic attacks. From 1977 to 2015, there were eight murders, 17 attempted murders, 42 bombings, 186 arsons, and 400 death threats targeting abortion clinics and providers. In 2019, the number of attacks in the U.S. against abortion providers more than doubled from the previous year, with a consistent escalation in attacks during the following years.<sup>2</sup> To this end, a recent Southern Nevada Counterterrorism

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<sup>1</sup> *DHS preparing for violence following abortion ruling*, Axios (May 18, 2022) (online at <https://www.axios.com/2022/05/18/supreme-court-abortion-roe-protests-violence>)

<sup>2</sup> National Abortion Federation, *NAF Violence and Disruption Statistics: Incidents of Violence and Disruption Against Abortion Providers* (2014) <http://5aa1b2xfmfh2e2mk03kk8rsx.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/>

Center (SNCTC) report assessed that local Nevada political figures, buildings housing state representative offices, and other targets may become a focal point for DVEs looking to capitalize on the heightened debate. We are especially troubled by SNCTC's analysis predicting that these attacks could present a threat to elections and election workers during the 2022 midterm cycle in Nevada and elsewhere around the country.

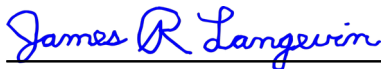
Historically, the incidence of violent attacks in the U.S. increases with changes in abortion policy. Moreover, a recent Center for Strategic and International Studies report found that over half of all domestic terrorist incidents in 2021 happened at or occurred around a metropolitan protest.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, we request that the Department share with Congress its efforts to coordinate with state and local law enforcement partners to develop a concrete plan for DVE threat mitigation as it relates to the abortion debate. To be clear, threat mitigation responses should not interfere with the right to meaningfully and peacefully protest. Additionally, we request that you provide information on any intelligence or operational coordination cells that the Department has stood up to monitor the growing threat environment.

You have called domestic violent extremism in its many forms one of the greatest terrorism threats to the U.S. As Members of Congress, we urge the Department to maintain its vigilance as we approach a particularly contentious period in the abortion debate and ask that the Department provide continued updates on threat mitigation efforts. Thank you for your ongoing work to support the interests of public safety and we look forward to your response.

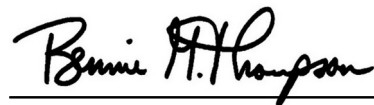
Sincerely,



Dina Titus  
Member of Congress



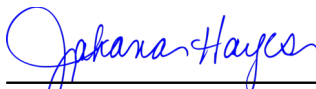
James R. Langevin  
Member of Congress



Bennie G. Thompson  
Member of Congress



Tom Malinowski  
Member of Congress



Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress



Eric Swalwell  
Member of Congress

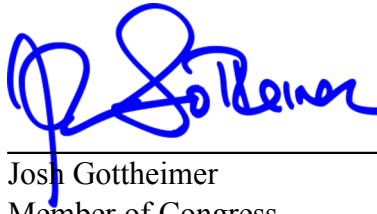
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<sup>3</sup> Center for Strategic and International Studies, *Pushed to Extremes: Domestic Terrorism and Polarization and Protest* (May 2022)



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Nikema Williams  
Member of Congress



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Josh Gottheimer  
Member of Congress



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Marilyn Strickland  
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Bonnie Watson Coleman  
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Kathy Manning  
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