COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Virginia State Legislators Decry the Ongoing Attacks and Violence Against Asian American and Pacific Islander communities throughout the Nation; Urge Federal, State, and Local Law Enforcement Authorities to be Vigilant in Identifying and Fully Prosecuting Hate Crimes

Richmond, VA—The Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) members of the Virginia General Assembly urge our colleagues and every Virginian to join us in condemning the violence against the AAPI communities across the country.

We mourn for the victims of the mass shooting in Georgia but note that it is not a coincidence that all three of the businesses targeted were owned by Asian Americans and that six of the victims are Asian American women.

Law enforcement authorities must investigate these tragic crimes to the fullest and not allow the perpetrator to frame the murders in his favor. Furthermore, media reports about this brutal mass murder must provide an honest and clear assessment of the killer's racially biased actions.

"This is racism and hate targeted at one of our most vulnerable communities," said **Del. Kelly Convirs-Fowler**. *"And the empathy exhibited for the murderer is problematic and contributes to the same hateful rhetoric as crowds chanting 'kung flu!'"*

The increasing violence towards our AAPI communities is overwhelming. Stop AAPI Hate reports 3,795 hate incidents targeting AAPIs in all 50 states and Washington DC between March 2020 and February 2021.

These incidents are no doubt the consequence of the harmful rhetoric that blames AAPIs for COVID-19. Continued use of terms like "Kung flu" or "China virus" has

led to AAPIs being stigmatized, assaulted, and killed and to AAPI businesses being vandalized.

"The rise in hate incidents against AAPIs is a direct result of Trump and his cronies insinuating that the AAPI community is responsible for this public health crisis. But the othering and scapegoating of AAPIs is not new. AAPIs have faced racism throughout our history, and this must stop," said **Del. Kathy KL Tran**. *"We honor the victims of the Georgia massacre and everyone who has experienced hate by speaking out against racism, bigotry, and violence and by working together to advance a more just and equitable future."*

Sen. Ghazala Hashmi points to the long history of scapegoating members of AAPI communities: *"Prejudicial rhetoric has often translated into policy that targets this community and serves to disenfranchise the AAPI. From the Chinese Exclusion Act to Japanese internment camps to contemporary false equations of Asian Americans with the pandemic, we have seen a continuous attempt to dehumanize and alienate Americans of Asian descent. We have to join our collective voices in condemning these hate crimes and hate speech."*

"As I see photos of these women, hear their names, and read about their journeys that brought them to America, I can't help but identify with their stories," said **Del. Mark Keam** who was born in Korea and immigrated to the United States as a teenager. *"These six, along with nearly 4,000 other Americans whose ancestry trace to Asia and Pacific Islands have suffered from bigoted prejudice that treat us as foreigners in our own country. It is time to Stop Hate Against AAPIs."*

Del. Suhas Subramanyam added, *"I have been grieving the lives lost in the Georgia attacks, alongside my AAPI community members. Unfortunately, this is one of many episodes of unprecedented violence, discrimination, and animosity toward AAPIs, especially since the start of this pandemic. We must come together to put an end to this hate."*

Senator Ghazala Hashmi (District 10, Chesterfield)
Delegate Mark L. Keam (District 35, Fairfax)
Delegate Kathy KL Tran (District 42, Fairfax)
Delegate Kelly K. Convirs-Fowler (District 21, Virginia Beach)
Delegate Suhas Subramanyam (District 87, Loudoun)

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