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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND
URBAN AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6075

LAURA SWANSON, STAFF DIRECTOR
BRAD GRANTZ, REPUBLICAN STAFF DIRECTOR

August 3, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

For more than a year, Democrat politicians and liberal activists have been publicly calling for police departments across the country to be defunded.¹ It was, therefore, startling to hear senior White House officials, including Press Secretary Jennifer Psaki, recently claim that Republicans, and not Democrats, are trying to defund the police.² Ms. Psaki's claim was so obviously untrue that even the *Washington Post* awarded it three Pinocchios.³ Nonetheless, we were glad to see your administration attempt to distance itself from the radical defund the police movement, which is a serious threat to public safety.⁴

That said, actions speak louder than words. Earlier this year, you nominated a vocal advocate of defunding the police—Kristen Clarke—to serve in a senior position at the U.S. Department of

¹ See e.g., Bob Fredericks, *\$1.5B in NYPD cut not enough for AOC: 'Defunding police means defunding police,'* New York Post (Jun. 30, 2020), <https://nypost.com/2020/06/30/aoc-says-1-5b-nypd-budget-slash-didnt-go-far-enough/>; Rebecca Klar, *Omar defends call to dismantle Minneapolis police: You can't reform a department 'rotten to the root,'* The Hill (Jun. 14, 2020), <https://thehill.com/homenews/house/502650-omar-defends-call-to-dismantle-minneapolis-police-you-cant-reform-a-department>; Madeleine Carlisle, *'This Is About True Reparations.'* Rep. Ayanna Pressley on the Movement to Defund Police, Time (Jun. 25, 2020), <https://time.com/5857571/ayanna-pressley-defund-police-time100-talks/>; Christina Zhao, *'Squad' Rep. Cori Bush Calls America 'Racist AF' After She Backs Defunding St. Louis Police,* Newsweek (May 2, 2021), <https://www.newsweek.com/squad-rep-cori-bush-calls-america-racist-af-after-she-backs-defunding-st-louis-police-1588171>; Karen Ruiz, *Jamaal Bowman defends defunding police in poor communities,* Daily Mail (Dec. 3, 2020), <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9016733/Jamaal-Bowman-defends-defunding-police-poor-communities.html>; Justin Vallejo, *Rashida Tlaib calls for 'no more police' following Daunte Wright shooting,* Independent (Apr. 13, 2021), <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/daunte-wright-killing-defund-police-b1830980.html>; Meghan Ottolini, *Ayanna Pressley, colleagues introduce bill to defund police in schools,* Boston Herald (Jun. 17, 2021), <https://www.bostonherald.com/2021/06/17/ayanna-pressley-colleagues-introduce-bill-to-defund-police-in-schools/>.

² Salvador Rizzo, *The White House's slipshod claim that Republicans are defunding the police,* Washington Post (Jul. 7, 2021), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/07/07/white-houses-slipshod-claim-that-republicans-are-defunding-police/>.

³ *Id.*

⁴ Public polling released around the time of Press Secretary Psaki's comments shows that almost two-thirds of Americans polled now believe violent crime is increasing, 70 percent are supportive of bigger police budgets, and 77 percent want more police officers patrolling the streets. See Lexi Lonas, *Nearly 2 in 3 say violent crime has increased in past year: poll,* The Hill (Jul. 8, 2021), <https://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/562064-nearly-2-in-3-say-violent-crime-has-increased-in-past-year-poll>.

Justice, our nation’s principal federal law enforcement agency. Last year, Ms. Clarke, wrote a column in *Newsweek* entitled “I Prosecuted Police Killings. Defund the Police—But Be Strategic,” in which she stated, among things, that “there are some parts of police budgets that should be eliminated immediately, like the federal ‘1033 program,’”—which has helped underfunded municipal law enforcement agencies purchase vehicles and equipment to keep cities safe—and “[w]e must invest less in police and more in social workers.”⁵ Unfortunately, Democrats in the Senate narrowly confirmed Ms. Clarke, despite her radical views, largely on a party-line vote.

If your administration is truly serious about distancing itself from radical anti-police movements championed by far-left activists like Ms. Clarke, you should strongly consider withdrawing any of your pending nominees who have advocated for defunding the police or endorsed other policies that would gravely jeopardize the health and safety of law enforcement officials or the communities they serve. At least two such nominees are currently pending before the Senate Banking Committee (Committee) alone. They are Solomon Greene, whom you nominated for Assistant Secretary for Policy Development and Research at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and Julia Gordon, whom you nominated for Assistant Secretary for the Office of Housing and Commissioner of the Federal Housing Administration at HUD.

Mr. Greene has used his Twitter account to make offensive public statements denigrating the police and advocating for defunding the police,⁶ especially those who serve in public housing.⁷ He followed up on this tweet by praising two far-Left organizations that have long advocated for defunding the police.⁸ Both of these anti-police tweets also appear to have been deleted from Mr. Greene’s Twitter account.⁹

⁵ Kristen Clarke, *I Prosecuted Police Killings. Defund the Police—But Be Strategic*, *Newsweek* (Jun. 11, 2020), <https://www.newsweek.com/i-prosecuted-police-killings-defund-police-strategic-opinion-1510018>.

⁶ See Letter from Pat Toomey, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs to Jack Dorsey, Chief Executive Officer, Twitter, Inc. (May 27, 2021), https://www.banking.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/toomey_letter_to_twitter.pdf; see also Solomon Greene and Margery Austin Turner, *Reimagining an Antiracist America—Starting with Our Neighborhoods*, Urban Institute (Jun. 19, 2020), (advocating for “recapturing funding from the police” and arguing that “too many families of color live in neighborhoods . . . endangered by overpolicing” and that “whiter and wealthier communities routinely spend more on schools and less on policing, and they are largely safer for it.”), <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/reimagining-antiracist-america-starting-our-neighborhoods>.

⁷ Archived tweet of Solomon Greene, Internet Archive Wayback Machine (May 30, 2020), (tweeting “No More Money for the Police” along with a quote saying: “Here’s another idea: Imagine if the money used to pay the salaries of police officers who endlessly patrol public housing buildings and harass residents can be used to fund plans that residents design to keep themselves safe.”), https://web.archive.org/web/20200530230218if_/https://twitter.com/metrosolomon/status/1266867002129494018.

⁸ Archived tweet of Solomon Greene, Internet Archive Wayback Machine (May 30, 2020), https://web.archive.org/web/20200530230742if_/https://twitter.com/metrosolomon/status/1266868130363723780; see also Funders for Justice (last accessed Jul. 19, 2021), <https://divest-ffj.org/> and <https://fundersforjustice.org/?s=defund>; and Neighborhood Funders Group (last accessed Jul. 19, 2021), <https://www.nfg.org/news/letter-nfg-community-our-president-nfgs-june-2020-newsletter> and <https://www.nfg.org/search?keys=defund>.

⁹ See Twitter account of Solomon Greene, Twitter (last accessed Jul. 19, 2021), <https://twitter.com/metrosolomon>.

Like Mr. Greene, Ms. Gordon also has a history of promoting troubling statements against law enforcement.¹⁰ For example, on June 3, 2020, she retweeted a thread from the National Community Stabilization Trust (NCST)—the organization she currently leads—indicating that NCST stood in solidarity with those “who seek to dismantle four hundred years of personal and structural racism.”¹¹ NCST’s apparent view—that police departments are structurally racist institutions that should be dismantled—aligns with a letter Ms. Gordon published on NCST’s website on July 16, 2020, in which she stated that, “We can only hope that the recent horrors of police violence and the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on communities of color has shown light on the fact that these problems are not just outliers or one-offs, but that they stem from flawed and biased systems that require structural change.”¹²

Mr. Greene and Ms. Gordon’s statements disparaging police officers and advocating for defunding the police are deeply disappointing and call into question their fitness to serve in senior positions in the federal government. Police officers put themselves in harm’s way every day to protect us. They deserve to be supported—not maligned—by federal officials. The decision to nominate individuals with troubling anti-police positions, such as Ms. Clarke, Mr. Greene, and Ms. Gordon, undermines the credibility of your administration’s claim to support America’s law enforcement officers. If your administration wants to be taken seriously in its effort to distance itself from radical anti-police movements, we urge you to withdraw the nominations of Mr. Greene, Ms. Gordon, and any other nominees with disparaging views on law enforcement pending before the Senate and stop nominating any additional anti-police advocates.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Pat Toomey
U.S. Senator



Richard Shelby
U.S. Senator

¹⁰ See Letter from Pat Toomey, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs to Julia Gordon, President, National Community Stabilization Trust (Jul. 15, 2021), (detailing anti-police Twitter posts and public statements by Julia Gordon, such as re-posting statements describing police officers as “the people killing us” and contending that police departments are structurally racist institutions), https://www.banking.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/ranking_member_toomey_letter_to_fha_nominee_julia_gordon.pdf.

¹¹ Retweet of @_NCST by Julia Gordon, Twitter (Jul. 3, 2020), https://twitter.com/_NCST/status/1268202015353643011/retweets.

¹² Letter from Julia Gordon, President of NCST, National Community Stabilization Trust (Jul. 16, 2020), <https://www.stabilizationtrust.org/letter-from-julia-gordon-july-2020/>.



Mike Crapo
U.S. Senator



Tim Scott
U.S. Senator



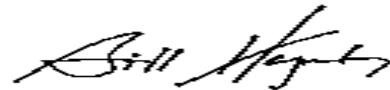
M. Michael Rounds
U.S. Senator



Thom Tillis
U.S. Senator



John Kennedy
U.S. Senator



Bill Hagerty
U.S. Senator



Cynthia Lummis
U.S. Senator



Jerry Moran
U.S. Senator



Kevin Cramer
U.S. Senator



Steve Daines
U.S. Senator

cc: The Honorable Sherrod Brown, Chairman, Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs