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Hearing on “Protecting Our Democracy’s Frontline Workers”

Before the Committee on the Judiciary

United States Senate

August 3, 2022

Chairman Durbin, Ranking Member Grassley, and other distinguished members of the Committee, my name is Mike Hurst and I am a partner in the Jackson, Mississippi office of the law firm Phelps Dunbar, LLP. I appreciate the invitation to be here today to testify on this important topic, and hopefully to raise awareness on an even more critical, pressing crisis adversely affecting our communities and our citizens.

Before joining Phelps in January 2021, I served as the United States Attorney for the Southern District of Mississippi, having been appointed by President Donald J. Trump and confirmed by the Senate in October 2017. Before that, among other things, I also served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Criminal Division of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Mississippi, primarily prosecuting white collar crime, and serving as the District Election Officer.

I am here today to give my perspective on these issues as a former Chief Federal Law Enforcement Officer, a former line federal prosecutor, and now as a private practitioner. The views I am expressing today are my own, and do not represent those of my firm, my clients, or anyone else.

I. Protecting Election Workers is Important, But Do the Resources Devoted by DOJ Match the Urgency of the Perceived Problem?

As I mentioned, during my time as an Assistant United States Attorney, I served as the District Election Officer for the Southern District of Mississippi, charged with the responsibility to ensure that our nation's election laws, and the rights of our citizens in the election process, were safeguarded and protected, and that anyone who attempted or violated our laws or the rights of individuals were brought to justice. In the approximately seven years in serving as the District Election Officer for the Southern District of Mississippi, at no time did I ever receive evidence of a threat made against any election officials or others connected with the election process.

Now, that being said, let me say this unequivocally – no one should be threatened, and if someone is threatened, then law enforcement (local, state and federal) should respond appropriately, investigate such threats, and bring to justice those who have violated our criminal laws, if there is evidence beyond a reasonable doubt that a crime has been committed.

In July 2021, the U.S. Department of Justice launched a task force to “address the rise in threats against election workers, administrators, officials and others associated with the electoral process.”¹ According to DOJ’s press release:

The task force is leading the Justice Department’s efforts to address threats of violence against election workers, and to ensure that all election workers—whether they be elected, appointed, or those who volunteer—be permitted to do their jobs free from threats and intimidation. The task force will receive and assess allegations and reports of threats against election workers and will partner with and support U.S. Attorneys’ Offices and FBI field offices throughout the country to investigate and prosecute these offenses where appropriate.²

And, just this past January 2022, Attorney General Merrick Garland, Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco and other DOJ and FBI officials conducted a virtual meeting with election officials to discuss updates on the Task Force’s work, including, at that time, the one case that DOJ had charged after reviewing almost 1,000 threats to election officials from across the country.³

It was also during this virtual meeting that Associate Attorney General Vanita Gupta explained that funds from the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (“JAG”) Program could be used to deter, detect and protect against threats of violence against election workers, administrators, officials and others associated with the electoral process.⁴

¹ See U.S. Department of Justice, *Justice Department Launches Task Force to Combat Threats Against Election Workers*, July 29, 2021, available at <https://www.justice.gov/opa/blog/justice-department-launches-task-force-combat-threats-against-election-workers-0> (last visited Aug. 1, 2022).

² *Id.*

³ See U.S. Department of Justice, *Readout of Justice Department Leadership Meeting with Election Officials*, Jan. 26, 2022, available at <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/readout-justice-department-leadership-meeting-election-officials> (last visited Aug. 1, 2022).

⁴ *Id.*; see also Vanita Gupta, *Associate Attorney General Memo to State Administering Agency Directors Regarding Byrne JAG Program*, Jan. 26, 2022, available at <https://www.justice.gov/opa/page/file/1465931/download> (last visited Aug. 1, 2022). The guidance from DOJ’s Bureau of Justice Assistance states that Byrne JAG funds can “be

Despite all these efforts, resources and attention focused by the U.S. Department of Justice on the issue of threats against election officials, over the past year since this Task Force has been operating, it is believed that only four (4) arrests have been made by those making threats against election officials. According to a recent news article from *The New York Times*, only one guilty plea has come from the Task Force’s work “out of more than 1,000 the Justice Department said it has evaluated.”⁵ Earlier this week, Assistant Attorney General Polite met with election workers and confirmed that out of more than a 1,000 reported contacts reviewed, the task force had only brought four (4) cases.⁶

As U.S. Attorney, I oversaw the investigations and prosecutions of individuals who had threatened violence against Members of Congress from Mississippi and/or their families. I also received and faced threats of violence (and even death threats) as U.S. Attorney, against both me and my family. It is clear that threats of violence should be taken seriously, thoroughly investigated and, if there is evidence supporting violations of criminal law, vigorously prosecuted.

However, that being said, as with everything in the realm of balancing public safety with the finite resources of government, there has to be a judgment call on how best to utilize those resources for the maximum impact and benefit of protecting people, saving lives and keeping citizens and communities safe. And in that balancing test, it must be asked whether DOJ should

used to deter, detect, and protect against threats of violence against election workers, administrators, officials, and others associated with the electoral process. Please note that JAG funds cannot be used to support any security enhancements or any equipment to any nongovernmental entity that is not engaged in criminal justice or public safety.” U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, *Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)*, updated June 2022, available at <https://bja.ojp.gov/doc/jag-faqs.pdf> (last visited Aug. 1, 2022).

⁵ Michael Wines and Eliza Fawcett, *Violent Threats to Election Workers Are Common. Prosecutions Are Not*, N.Y. TIMES, June 27, 2022, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/27/us/election-workers-safety.html> (last visited Aug. 1, 2022).

⁶ See U.S. Department of Justice, *Readout of Election Threats Task Force Briefing with Election Officials and Workers*, Aug. 1, 2022, available at <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/readout-election-threats-task-force-briefing-election-officials-and-workers> (last visited Aug. 2, 2022).

be expending its finite resources on threats to election officials when there has been such a rapid and significant rise in violent crime and homicides throughout our country.

Sadly, to many, it appears that the Biden Administration is either intentionally or negligently misdiagnosing the problems facing this nation, resulting in many more victims of violent crime and families losing loved ones. It is kind of like a doctor focusing on the unhealthy eating habits of a patient while the patient is literally having a heart attack. The inquiry and response of the attending entity here do not meet the realities and needs of the immediate crisis at hand. It is less than offering a Band-Aid to a gunshot victim, and more akin to asking the relatives of the gunshot victim about any potential medical issues that they might have or that might occur to them in the future, without regard for the quickly perishing patient. As Princeton sociologist Patrick Sharkey recently stated, the year 2020 “was a huge surge of violence, and the most violent year of the century.”⁷ The response and focus of, as well as the time and resources currently being expended by, the Department of Justice do not appear to be adequately addressing the most pressing criminal justice problem facing our nation and its citizens – violent crime.

II. The U.S. Department of Justice Can Do and Should Be Doing More to Address, Combat and Reduce Surging Violent Crime Nationwide

A. DOJ’s Top Priority and Resources Should Be Directed to Addressing Violent Crime

Crime in the United States began climbing during the presidency of Lyndon B. Johnson, and continued on this upward trajectory until the early 1990s.⁸ But, beginning in 1993, crime in the United States began to fall, and continued to fall, until recently.

⁷ Derek Thompson, *Why America’s Great Crime Decline is Over*, THE ATLANTIC, Mar. 24, 2021, available at <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/03/is-americas-great-crime-decline-over/618381/> (last visited Aug. 1, 2022).

⁸ See Matt Ford, *What Caused the Great Crime Decline in the U.S.?*, THE ATLANTIC, Apr. 15, 2016, available at <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/04/what-caused-the-crime-decline/477408/> (last visited Aug. 1, 2022).

While crime has fallen precipitously over the last few decades, our nation began seeing an uptick in violent crime in 2015.⁹ According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), violent crime rose 7% between 2014 and 2016,¹⁰ with homicides climbing an astounding 20% during that same, short period of time.¹¹

It was during this time, beginning in 2017 with then-Attorney General Jeff Sessions and later under then-Attorney General William Barr, that DOJ began implementing policies and initiatives to tackle violent crime head on, including a reinvigorated Project Safe Neighborhoods program, Project Guardian, and Operation Legend, among many others.

After the successful implementation of these and many other programs by DOJ, the nation experienced three consecutive years (2017-2019) of a decline in violent crime.¹² While preliminary FBI data indicated “overall declines in the number of violent crimes and property

⁹ Ames Grawert, *Crime Trends 1990-2016*, BRENAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE, Apr. 18, 2017, available at <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/crime-trends-1990-2016> (last visited Aug. 1, 2022) (“The violent crime rate also peaked in 1991 at 716 violent crimes per 100,000, and now stands at 366, about half that rate. However, the violent crime rate, like rates of murder and over-all crime, has risen and fallen during this time. For example, violent crime registered small increases in 2005 and 2006, and then resumed its down-ward trend. In 2015, violent crime increased by 2.9 percent nationally and by 2.0 percent in the nation’s 30 largest cities. Preliminary data for 2016 also show a greater increase in the national violent crime rate, up 6.3 percent, and a smaller jump in the 30 largest cities, 2.4 percent.”).

¹⁰ See *Violent Crime, Crime in the United States 2016*, UNIFORM CRIME REPORT (2017), available at <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2016/crime-in-the-u.s.-2016/topic-pages/violent-crime> (last visited Aug. 1, 2022) (explaining that the 2016 violent crime rate in America “rose 3.4 percent when compared with the 2015 estimated violent crime rate.”); see also *Violent Crime, Crime in the United States 2015*, UNIFORM CRIME REPORT (2016), available at https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2015/crime-in-the-u.s.-2015/offenses-known-to-law-enforcement/violent-crime/violentcrimemain_final (last visited Aug. 1, 2022) (“There were an estimated 372.6 violent crimes per 100,000 inhabitants in 2015, a rate that rose 3.1 percent when compared with the 2014 estimated violent crime rate.”).

¹¹ See *2016 Crime in the United States, Table 1, Crime in the United States by Volume and Rate per 100,000 Inhabitants, 1997-2016*, FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, available at <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2016/crime-in-the-u.s.-2016/tables/table-1> (finding that in 2016, the estimated number of murders in the nation was 17,250, an 8.6% increase from the 2015 estimate; also finding that in 2015, the estimated number of murders in the nation was 15,883, a 10.8% increase from the 2014 estimate).

¹² U.S. Department of Justice, *FBI Report on Crime Shows Decline in Violent Crime Rate for Third Consecutive Year*, Sept. 28, 2020, available at <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/fbi-report-crime-shows-decline-violent-crime-rate-third-consecutive-year> (last visited Aug. 1, 2022) (“After decreases in both 2017 and 2018, the violent crime rate dropped an additional one percent this past year and the property crime rate decreased 4.5 percent. . . . In 2019, there were an estimated 1,203,808 violent crimes and an estimated violent crime rate of 366.7 violent crimes per 100,000 inhabitants. This represented a one percent decrease from the prior year. The FBI’s UCR data indicates that the violent crime rate dropped 0.7 percent in 2017 and 3.5 percent in 2018 from the prior years.”)

crimes reported for the first six months of 2020 when compared with figures for the first six months of 2019,”¹³ the final statistics for 2020 saw a 5.6% increase in violent crime from 2019.¹⁴ While it does not appear the FBI has released violent crime statistics for 2021, the Council on Criminal Justice found that in the 29 American cities it studied, “[o]ver the past two years [2020-2021], homicides and gun assaults trended upward while most property crimes receded.”¹⁵ As the CCJ stated in its report, “[h]omicides and gun violence should continue to be the nation’s top criminal justice policy priority.”¹⁶

Sadly, Mississippi’s capital city has not been immune to this frightening trend. In 2021, Jackson, Mississippi, became the murder capital of America, experiencing 155 homicides, the highest in the city’s history and also the highest per capita rate in the nation – “[h]igher than Birmingham, Atlanta, Detroit, and even Chicago, the city with the most overall slayings in 2021.”¹⁷ To put it in perspective, the American city with the most overall murders in 2021 – Chicago, Illinois – had a homicide rate of 29.6 per 100,000 population. Jackson, on the other hand, had a homicide rate in 2021 more than three times Chicago’s, or about 100 per 100,000 population.¹⁸ As historical context for Jackson itself, the city experienced 130 murders in 2020 (at that point, an all-time record), and before 2020, the most murders ever recorded in Jackson was at the tail end of the nation’s decades-long crime wave – 92 murders in 1995. It appears that violent crime, and in particular murders, are plaguing our cities throughout the country.

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ See *Violent Crime, Crime in the United States 2020*, UNIFORM CRIME REPORT (2021), Fall 2021, available at <https://crime-data-explorer.app.cloud.gov/pages/downloads> (last visited Aug. 1, 2022).

¹⁵ Richard Rosenfeld, et. al, *Pandemic, Social Unrest, and Crime in U.S. Cities*, COUNCIL ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE, at 3, July 2022, available at <https://secure.counciloncj.org/np/viewDocument?orgId=counciloncj&id=2e918083823e4147018241b683430050> (last visited Aug. 1, 2022).

¹⁶ *Id.* at 24.

¹⁷ Jimmie Gates, ‘*There’s something wrong when Jackson’s murder rate is higher than Atlanta, official says*, THE CLARION LEDGER, Jan. 27, 2022, available at <https://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/2022/01/27/jackson-mississippi-2021-homicides-highest-per-capita-murder-rate/9230045002/> (last visited Aug. 1, 2022).

¹⁸ *Id.*

In order to truly combat this rising violent crime and murders, we must have an engaged U.S. Department of Justice who makes it a priority and moves resources to save lives using strategies that have been demonstrated and proved in the past.

B. Proven Solutions for U.S. Department of Justice to Reduce Violent Crime

There are numerous initiatives, operations and actions that the Department of Justice has implemented over the years, but for brevity's sake, I will mention two recent, successful programs that had a significant impact on reducing violent crime and making communities safer.

1. *Project Safe Neighborhoods*

In 2001, the U.S. Department of Justice launched Project Safe Neighborhoods ("PSN"), a program designed to bring together all levels of law enforcement, prosecutors, community leaders and other stakeholders in order to identify, address and reduce violent crime in individual communities. Individual U.S. Attorneys' Offices throughout the nation's 94 federal judicial districts were tasked with leading and coordinating PSN in their respective districts, with such PSN programs customized and adaptable in each district to account for local, unique violent crime problems and resources.

Under President Trump, then-Attorney General Jeff Sessions reinvigorated the PSN program in 2017, not just in word but in deed, unleashing federal dollars and authorization for the hiring of additional federal prosecutors in U.S. Attorney's Offices throughout the country, and directing United States Attorneys to develop, implement and lead new PSN programs that were tailored specifically to their districts in order to reverse and reduce violent crime.¹⁹

Shortly after being sworn in as United States Attorney, I spoke with the leadership and officers of the Jackson Police Department. The recurring theme I heard was how demoralized the

¹⁹ Press Release, U.S. Dep't of Justice, *Attorney General Jeff Sessions Announces Reinvigoration of Project Safe Neighborhoods* (Oct. 5, 2017), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/attorney-general-sessions-announces-reinvigoration-project-safe-neighborhoods-and-other>.

patrol officers were. One officer told me: “Mike, I have arrested the same guy for the third or fourth time, and the last time, as I was walking him to the patrol car, he laughed at me, saying that he would be released and back on the street before I finished my paperwork. And he was right.” In fact, this pattern was confirmed in one of the cases that we adopted from the local Hinds County District Attorney, where the local judge even admitted that she normally just releases people after an indictment and simply puts them on house arrest.

What we began to see in Jackson was that criminals were doing almost whatever they wanted without concern or worry about being held liable with any consequences for their actions.

Sadly, there were many examples of unrestrained criminality occurring throughout our capital city: a man arrested locally for murder was released and then almost immediately committed a carjacking and shooting the very next day after being released; an 82-year-old woman carjacked and her life threatened by a criminal with a long rap sheet who was on probation; a disabled convenience store clerk threatened at gunpoint and beaten during a robbery; and a young mom carjacked at a day care center with her child barely escaping the car and then almost being run over by the assailants. These and countless other cases illustrated the lawless mentality of criminals in Jackson, their disregard of and disdain for law enforcement and law-abiding citizens, and their belief that they could avoid any and all consequences for their illegal actions. There had been no consequences for their actions for so long, but that was about to change.

In response to Attorney General Sessions’ directive, in December 2017, I launched in the City of Jackson our new PSN initiative called Project EJECT, which stood for “Empower

Jackson Expel Crime Together.”²⁰ One goal of the project was to empower Jacksonians through an awareness campaign, prevention presentations in schools and clubs, and the facilitation of re-entry and rehabilitation options once individuals are released from prison, helping them to get back on their feet and become law abiding, contributing members of society. Another goal was to expel crime from our capital city, combining the resources of and increasing coordination among local, state and federal law enforcement in order to prosecute all violent criminals in Jackson with the goal of returning the streets to the law-abiding residents of Jackson and making neighborhoods safe again. Finally, we knew we could not accomplish any of these audacious goals unless we worked together, as a strong partnership with a true team mentality.

I am proud to say that those instances of violent crime just mentioned above were all subsequently adopted and prosecuted by the United States Attorney’s Office under Project EJECT.

About five months after implementing Project EJECT, I also learned that we were making a difference in changing the mindset of violent criminals in Jackson. During a recorded jail phone call, one inmate stated to another that “the feds picking everything up in Jackson[,]” to which the other inmate responded “That’s crazy, right? Got Jackson running now[,]” to which the first inmate stated, “the feds a whole different ballgame.”²¹

That inmate was right. The Feds are a whole different ballgame. DOJ can make a real difference, but leadership and priorities matter. As a result of DOJ taking a strong interest and

²⁰ Press Release, U.S. Dep’t of Justice, *U.S. Attorney’s Office, Law Enforcement Partners, and Community Leaders Introduce PROJECT EJECT to Combat Violent Crime in City of Jackson* (Dec. 7, 2017); see also Marsha Thompson, *Project Eject: A United Front Against the Uptick in Violent Crime*, WLBT CHANNEL 3 NBC (updated Dec. 7, 2017); Jeff Amy, *Federal Prosecutor Announces Crackdown on Crime in Jackson*, U.S. NEWS (Dec. 7, 2017), <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/mississippi/articles/2017-12-07/federal-prosecutor-announces-crackdown-on-crime-in-jackson>.

²¹ Mike Hurst, *Project EJECT: A Whole Different Ballgame in Fighting Violent Crime in the City of Jackson*, DOJ JOURNAL OF FEDERAL LAW AND PRACTICE, November 2018, at 13-14, available at <https://www.justice.gov/usao/page/file/1116661/download> (last visited Aug. 1, 2022).

being directly involved in combatting and reducing violent crime in individual judicial districts throughout the country through PSN, we began seeing violent crime fall across the United States.

After the first full year of Project EJECT being implemented in Jackson, Mississippi, our capital city saw approximately 130 violent criminals indicted, with average sentences of six years in federal prison, 97% detained while awaiting trial (to prevent them from continuing to terrorize our communities), and 129 illegal firearms taken off the streets of Jackson.²² And, most importantly, Jackson experienced a 7% reduction in overall violent crime, which translated into 108 fewer victims of violent crime.²³

And this is just one example. Over the past 20 years, the Department of Justice has collected and has numerous examples of other effective PSN strategies in other districts that can be shared and implemented throughout our country in order to effectively reduce violent crime. However, the Department has to make actually prosecuting violent criminals and holding them accountable a priority, and not only partnering with local law enforcement, but also giving U.S. Attorney's Offices and their state and local law enforcement counterparts the tools and resources needed to get the job done. Through such leadership and prioritization of strongly enforcing our criminal laws, DOJ can effectively help reduce violent crime again.

2. *Operation Legend*

Operation Legend was a Department of Justice initiative launched in Kansas City, Missouri in July 2020 to refocus and redouble federal resources by temporarily reassigning and surging federal law enforcement officers to particular cities that were experiencing significant and worrisome increases in violent crime. Named in honor of four-year-old LeGend Taliferro,

²² Mike Hurst, *Project EJECT Has Reduced Crime in Jackson Through Partnerships, Creative Strategies*, THE CLARION LEDGER, Jan. 15, 2019, available at <https://www.clarionledger.com/story/opinion/columnists/2019/01/15/us-attorney-mike-hurst-project-eject-has-reduced-crime-jackson/2584742002/> (last visited Aug. 1, 2022).

²³ *Id.*

who was shot and killed while he slept in his bed in Kansas City, the results of the operation were astounding.

In just 6 months, spread over 9 cities, DOJ had arrested 6,000 violent criminals, including approximately 467 for murder; seized more than 2,600 firearms; and confiscated more than 32 kilos of heroin, more than 17 kilos of fentanyl, more than 300 kilos of methamphetamine, more than 135 kilos of cocaine, and more than \$11 million in drug and other illicit proceeds.²⁴ “Of the more than 6,000 individuals arrested, approximately 1,500 have been charged with federal offenses. Approximately 815 of those defendants have been charged with firearms offenses, while approximately 566 have been charged with drug-related crimes. The remaining defendants have been charged with various offenses.”²⁵

Back in Jackson, Mississippi, as our violent crime began to creep back up in 2020 as a result of Jackson’s mayor quietly directing the Jackson Police Department to discontinue partnering with Project EJECT because of political reasons, I requested Operation Legend be expanded to our capital city. While I received the unanimous support of the Jackson City Council, all Democrats and one Republican, I was rebuffed by the Democratic mayor of Jackson, who refused such assistance, framing the narrative as President Trump’s attempt to “occupy” or “militarize” Jackson.²⁶ As shown above, in other Democrat-controlled cities throughout our country, Operation Legend was welcomed by those of all political backgrounds and successfully implemented, bringing criminals to justice, taking illegal guns, drugs and money off the streets, and saving lives.

²⁴ U.S. Department of Justice, *Attorney General William P. Barr Announces Results of Operation Legend*, Dec. 23, 2020, available at <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/attorney-general-william-p-barr-announces-results-operation-legend> (last visited Aug. 1, 2022).

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ Mike Hurst, *A Safe Jackson Begins with Strong Law Enforcement and Local Leadership*, THE CLARION LEDGER, Oct. 14, 2020, available at <https://www.clarionledger.com/story/opinion/2020/10/14/crime-what-jackson-needs-to-do-mike-hurst-opinion/3645050001/> (last visited Aug. 1, 2022).

The Department of Justice can do this again, lead by example, and put its resources into “surges” of federal law enforcement into our most desperate cities and areas which are being overrun by violent crime.

III. Conclusion

I will leave you with a quote from Shadi Hamid in a recent piece he wrote for The Atlantic entitled “The Liberals Who Won’t Acknowledge the Crime Problem.”²⁷

Sometimes, particularly when it comes to actual criminals, crime must be punished.

It is easy to dismiss this line of argument as a right-wing trope. Because everything is a culture war, what hurts Democrats benefits Republicans. To acknowledge crime in left-wing bastions is to concede something to conservatives, or so the thinking goes. But this isn’t quite right. After all, it is people of color—not the predominantly white liberals who often dismiss the prevalence of crime as a right-wing talking point—who are most affected by crime in American cities. There’s something odd about those same white liberals, along with the politicians and pundits who cater to their sensibilities, insisting that rising crime rates are a figment of our imagination.

That crime is real—and getting worse—is not a fantasy. The recall of [San Francisco District Attorney Chesa] Boudin succeeded in an overwhelmingly liberal city. The problem of crime is hurting and dividing liberals, because crime is not—or at least should not be—a matter of left or right, subsumed by the superficial polarization that is roiling American life.²⁸

Crime is real. Crime is getting worse. Crime must be dealt with and punished. As we sit here and talk about mean things that have been said or communicated to election workers, people are becoming real victims of violence. I have sat at the kitchen tables of mothers and grandmothers in the City of Jackson, trying to raise their kids and grandkids in the city in which they grew up and with no means or desire of leaving, and I have heard the same thing – they just want to be safe, they want their kids and grandkids to be safe, and they want to live in a community free of

²⁷ Shadi Hamid, *The Liberals Who Won’t Acknowledge the Crime Problem*, THE ATLANTIC, June 21, 2022, available at <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2022/06/us-city-violent-crime-rate-perception/661337/> (last visited Aug. 1, 2022).

²⁸ *Id.*

violence and danger. The Department has contributed to these lofty goals in the past, and they can do it again.

In establishing the United States Constitution, our Founding Fathers set forth in the prelude to the Constitution that their highest priority after forming a more perfect union was “establish Justice.” The Department of Justice has a long, storied tradition of doing just that, rising above politics, enforcing our criminal and civil laws, and effectively making our citizens safer. The most important role of government is to protect its citizens, and DOJ can once again lead in this arena. However, the Department must quickly reprioritize its goals, direct resources to proven programs that work and save lives, and act expeditiously in order to prevent that next person from becoming a victim of violent crime. By working with local, state and federal law enforcement, as well as our citizens and other stakeholders, DOJ can once again reduce violent crime and make a real, positive difference in people’s lives and our communities.