

Prepared Opening Statement by Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa
Ranking Member, Senate Judiciary Committee
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First, I want to thank Chairman Durbin for listing the “Justice and Mental Health Collaboration Reauthorization Act.” Senator Cornyn leads this bipartisan effort, and I’m proud to cosponsor this bill.

Americans with mental illness are overrepresented in jail and prisons. In fact, according to the Justice Department and the National Alliance on Mental Illness, about 2 million people with mental illnesses are in jails each year.

During the Bush Administration, Congress created a program to address the needs of justice-involved individuals with mental illness. I supported this bill’s creation in 2004 and each reauthorization since. Because of the original law, state and local governments have been able to set up and fund mental health courts, specialized first responder options, in-facility treatment for mental illness and substance abuse, and intervention for juvenile offenders. These programs have proven effective, and S. 3846 continues this track record.

A wide cohort of law enforcement, mental health professionals, drug policy experts, and corrections leaders have endorsed this legislation. I thank Senator Cornyn for his leadership on this important issue.

I also want to address the ongoing protests targeting the homes of Supreme Court justices. Yesterday, I sent a letter to the Justice Department asking them to commit to protecting the justices and our courts, including prosecuting those demonstrators who seek to influence the court’s decision in the *Dobbs* case.

I want to thank Governor Hogan and Governor Youngkin. They’ve spoken publicly about ensuring security is provided to the justices. I’m also happy to see that after I sent my letter the DOJ said that the U.S. Marshals Service would provide more support to help ensure the justices’ safety. That was a good first step.

But I’m still very disappointed that the Justice Department has been so muted. After all, it took them less than five days to push out a memo to the entire department about the threat of parents attending school board meetings. And here, federal law certainly makes some of the worst conduct illegal.

I’ve heard some saying that protests targeting the justices are okay because politicians have protests at their houses. That completely misunderstands our form of government. Members of congress are elected to represent the people. We’re expected to listen to public opinion. Judges aren’t supposed to be swayed.

And we shouldn't endorse the idea that protesting at the justices' homes is acceptable. It undermines faith in the independence of the judiciary. Even if the demonstrations have no effect, people may wonder whether they did. The lack of faith in courts undermines the rule of law.

This administration needs to publicly commit to protecting the justices and the independence of the court. That includes condemning the efforts to intimidate the justices and holding those responsible accountable.

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