



**Written Statement of Congresswoman Judy Chu (CA-27)  
Chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus**

**Senate Committee on the Judiciary Hearing on “Constitutional and Common  
Sense Steps to Reduce Gun Violence”**

**March 23, 2021**

As Chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, I submit this statement for the record for the Senate Judiciary Committee’s March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021 Hearing titled “Constitutional and Common Sense Steps to Reduce Gun Violence.”

Last week, America was shocked by the latest mass shooting, this time targeting three Asian-owned businesses outside Atlanta, Georgia. Once again, innocent Americans were shot and killed in the largest mass shooting since the Coronavirus pandemic began. And once again, it was a shooting that was within our power to prevent. Eight lives have been lost, families in grief, and communities in terror because this Senate has refused to pass common sense gun reform.

The horrific shootings in Georgia last week were hate crimes. We do not need to wait for the shooter to admit it because his actions shouted it. Motivated by racism and xenophobia, the shooter first targeted a business named Young’s Asian Massage before driving 27 miles away to two more Asian-owned businesses. All turned lethal because earlier that day, he was able to purchase a 9 mm handgun.

Nobody should have the means to act on a murderous passion. And as Asian American communities are reeling from the latest in a string of over 3,800 anti-Asian hate incidents and hate crimes, they deserve to know that they are safe from violent prejudices. That is why, as the Chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), I am privileged to express my support for H.R. 8, the Bipartisan Background Checks Act, and HR 1446, which closes the loophole used by the Charleston shooter to enact his own racist killing spree. I am proud that the House of Representatives voted just last week to advance both bills through our chamber, and I urge you to consider these critical pieces of legislation.

In a shameful attempt to absolve the shooter or explain away his murderous rampage, Captain Jay Baker of the Cherokee County Sheriff’s office - who has his own history of anti-Asian comments - made the case for why nobody should be able to buy a gun on demand. “He was pretty much fed up and kind of at the end of his rope,” Baker said of the shooter. “Yesterday was

a really bad day for him and this is what he did.” A “bad day” is not an excuse for murder. And because Georgia does not have a waiting period on gun purchases, they enabled this shooter to make his “bad day” eight other people’s last day.

Even before the coronavirus pandemic led to a plague of Anti-Asian violence, support for common sense gun violence reform, like H.R. 8 and H.R. 1446, was incredibly high among Asian Americans. A 2016 poll, for instance found that 77% of all Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) believe the US should have stricter gun laws.

This support has only gone up amid the increase in violence against Asian Americans over the past year. Stoked by the words of former President Donald Trump who used racial slurs like “Wuhan virus,” “China plague,” and “Kung flu” to shift blame and anger away from his own flawed response to the pandemic, violent xenophobes have been terrorizing Asian American communities. What started as dirty looks and spitting escalated into physical assaults, and now, a mass shooting. And with xenophobia, bigotry, and division at alarmingly high levels in our country, it is more important than ever that we ensure we are doing everything we can to keep guns out of the wrong hands.

It is up to us to protect our constituents from this violence. Right now, somebody influenced by these slurs, who believes the xenophobic rhetoric from political leaders who tell them to blame foreigners for the anxiety and hurt of this pandemic, has the ability to act on that anger in minutes. Without a second thought, someone could buy a gun and take eight lives. That is simply inexcusable, and we have the power to put a stop to it.

We know that background checks work. Since we began the background check process in 1994, over 3 million people legally prohibited from owning a gun have been stopped from purchasing a gun. But our patchwork system of laws means that loopholes in one state can mean murder in another. That is why we need national legislation to address this problem.

Stronger gun laws mean fewer gun deaths. This is a fact borne out in multiple studies. We can no longer act like we are powerless to stop mass murders when we know there is so much we can do.

Xenophobic speech has created an atmosphere of anger and resentment. And lax gun laws have created the conditions that allow murderers to act on these feelings without a second thought. This is a toxic combination and too many communities of color, schools, houses of worship, businesses, and more have had to pay the price for our inaction. It’s time to protect Americans. It’s time to pass common sense gun reforms.