

**CIVIL SOCIETY CALLS FOR LOCAL LEADERS TO ADDRESS  
INTIMIDATION AND THREATS DIRECTED AT IMMIGRANTS AND  
PEOPLE OF COLOR**

October 29, 2020

We are leaders and staff of New Jersey organizations led by or working with immigrants and people of color. During this difficult election season, we respectfully ask that you stand with immigrants and New Jerseyans of color and denounce intimidation and violence against these communities. Please publicly confirm that you have a plan to fight threats to these communities around the election, and if you do not have one, please develop and release one as soon as possible. We stand ready to help with this process.

Throughout this election, national leaders have targeted immigrant communities and communities of color with hateful rhetoric and insinuations about “voter fraud.” These words have consequences. The NJ Attorney General’s office has reported that the number of bias crimes in New Jersey has increased every year since 2016, with 994 reported bias crimes against people of color, immigrants, religious minorities, and other groups in 2019. Sadly, nearly half of recent bias incidents have involved youth.

While state officials are planning to safeguard New Jersey’s election, the harassment we are seeing in immigrant communities and communities of color goes beyond voter intimidation. The result is an atmosphere of growing unease, including for many of us personally, that makes us afraid to walk alone or to leave our homes at night. It illustrates how bad the situation has become that in our neighboring state of Pennsylvania, a woman felt empowered to yell racial slurs at the state’s Second Lady in a grocery store line.

You have a powerful platform to denounce intimidation, respond to threats, and deescalate tensions. With that comes a responsibility to use this power. Political leaders’ denunciations of violence reduce the likelihood that private citizens will support violence. Our experience has also shown us how messages of support from leaders can show communities they are valued.

As a first step in this fraught time, we ask you to take the following actions:

- Release a statement to the press or on social media supporting immigrant communities and communities of color and condemning intimidation.
- Disclose whether you have a plan to counteract threats to immigrant communities and communities of color around the election.
- If you do not have such a plan, develop one as soon as possible, covering not just the election but the months between the election and Inauguration Day.

We are doing our part to create a clearer picture of this problem in our state. The NJ Consortium for Immigrant Children is launching Safe NJ, an initiative to collect and map reports of intimidation. In the runup to November 3, we encourage people who experience intimidation at or near a polling place or voter registration location to call the National Election Protection Hotline at 866-OUR-VOTE. A list of additional NJ voting rights resources is available at <https://bit.ly/2TB6TtW>. For more information, visit <https://njcic.org/safenj/>.

Respectfully,

American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey

Center for Immigrant Representation, a project of Immigrant Justice Corps

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