September 28, 2017

Dear Senators Warner, Kaine, Gardner, Isakson, Murkowski, and Blumenthal,

On behalf of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI), we thank you for introducing and advocating for the passage of S. J. Res. 49, which condemns the violence perpetuated in Charlottesville by white supremacists and other hate groups; rejects white supremacy and other hateful expressions of intolerance that are contradictory to the values that define Americans; and urges the Executive Branch to use all available resources to investigate and prosecute acts of hate-based violence and domestic terrorism, improve the collection and reporting of hate crimes, and speak out against hate groups and the messages they seek to advance.

Founded in 1936, SPSSI is an organization of scholars, educators, and students who are deeply invested in using psychological science to benefit society. Our membership includes researchers who study racism, prejudice, intolerance, hate crimes, and terrorism—among other issues—both within and outside of the United States. This scholarship focuses on a variety of vulnerable and/or targeted populations, including groups that have been a target of white supremacists.
Psychological research has been instrumental in explaining how hate groups recruit new members, establish themselves in communities, and identify potential “recruits.” Psychological research has also shed light onto the short- and long-term effects of hearing hate speech and experiencing hate-based violence, and guided what interventions are developed to address such effects and, ideally, prevent hate in the first place. As a community of scholars, we appreciate the Joint Resolution not only on its own merits but also because the ideas contained therein are consistent with what the science shows.

SPSSI members—based out of universities, research institutions, and other organizations—have a deep commitment to conducting and sharing research for the betterment of society. Please contact our Policy Director Sarah Mancoll (E: smancoll@spssi.org, T: 202-675-6956) if we can ever direct you to research and/or expertise on this or other topics.

The United States has a long and painful history of white supremacy and hate-based violence, but it also has a long and revered history of pluralism and progress. As we move forward in the wake of Charlottesville, we urge Congress to remain vigilant and vocal against white supremacy in the hope that pluralism and progress continue to win out.

Sincerely,

Executive Committee, Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues

Wendy Williams, Ph.D.
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