

April 26, 2023

Hon. Patty Murray
Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20501

Hon. Kay Granger
Chair, House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Susan Collins
Vice Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20501

Hon. Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Murray, Chair Granger, Vice Chair Collins, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

We write to urge your committees to eliminate funding of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's biased, unfounded Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP) Grants Program and the office that administers it, the Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3). First started in the Obama Administration as countering violent extremism, the TVTP program has a long history of targeting Americans based on religion, mental health, political beliefs, and innocuous behavior. These programs are wasteful, providing no security benefits and actively undermining civil rights, civil liberties, and privacy. CP3 administers only the grants program, related training, and supporting functions, and without TVTP funds to administer, the office's budget should also be eliminated.

Organizations like the [Brennan Center for Justice](#) and [grassroots advocates](#) like the [Muslim Justice League](#) have long called for the shuttering of these harmful programs. No evidence demonstrates that they are effective in reducing violence. Grant programs typically rely on a [discredited](#) "radicalization" theory, the false idea that there are reliable predictive risk indicators demonstrating that someone is on a path to violence. Government-identified behavioral indicators have included communicating that one is in distress, deviating from one's routine, isolation, economic stress, paying off debts, or being preoccupied with a person, place, belief, or cause. They are often commonplace, innocuous, or otherwise easily explained, and the [CATO Institute](#) has explained the harm to free association and speech caused by this baseless type of surveillance. Yet unreliable indicators remain central to the grants: Nearly 80 percent of 2020 grantees and over 50 percent of 2021 grantees relied on them.

Over the last few years, DHS has begun to shift to an equally nebulous "public health" behavioral threat assessment model that actually undermines access to healthcare and further erodes the accountability of grant programs. This new model has grantees train mental health professionals to carry out law enforcement functions such as identifying and reporting perceived threats, and turning clinics and medical assessments into sites of surveillance. While DHS is [adamant](#) this work emphasizes alternatives to police involvement, the money begs to differ: In 2020, 86 percent of grantee programs involved law enforcement, as did 78 percent in 2021. Across those two years, 26 initiatives directly involved fusion centers and state homeland security agencies—national security hubs with a history of promoting debunked radicalization theory, characterizing protests and dissent as dangerous, and misconstruing innocuous behavior as indicative of imminent violence.

Using mental health services and professionals in this manner is seriously damaging. There are few privacy and rights protections for medical health information in DHS's grants, risking compromising patient

confidentiality. Roping health and welfare groups into performing policing functions also [compromises](#) the willingness of patients, especially those coming from vulnerable populations, to seek crucial health care for fear of being surveilled by or reported to law enforcement.

DHS, the [FBI](#), and the [U.S. Intelligence Community](#) have belatedly acknowledged white supremacist violence as the greatest danger facing the country. Accordingly DHS has branded CP3 and its grants as a key tool to address that violence. But again DHS's spending does not bear out its promise. While half of the 2021 grants mention violence by white supremacists or the far-right, it is mostly a passing reference not reflected in grantee activities. In fact, only three of the 37 projects funded by DHS in 2021 claim to target white supremacist violence. Two traffic in unfounded methods. The third, which brings together black and white musicians to talk and record music, is attenuated from any violence prevention.

While DHS takes an elastic view of what constitutes "terrorism," when it cannot shoehorn violence into that category it has simply expanded the scope of its work. Starting in 2019, DHS widened the grant program's aperture to address a broader category of activity it calls "targeted violence," which would include conduct like school shootings. It has done this without any express authorization from Congress; the phrase appears nowhere in DHS's legal authorities.

The scope of targeted violence would cover crimes as disparate as school shootings, mass shootings, sabotaging oil pipelines, and hate crimes in the same category, applying to these different behaviors the same debunked framework. DHS [concedes](#) that risk factors and indicators are not necessarily shared among different types of violence. And yet, DHS transplants the same flawed methodology to address this broader, more diverse set of crimes, which is then reflected in grantees' projects.

Throughout all this, the subjects of grant programs continue to be the marginalized communities they have long targeted. These prevention programs have a history of harming American Muslims and early ones sought to turn teachers and students into government spies, inject counterterrorism into places of worship and community centers, and stigmatize and alienate targeted communities. During the Trump Administration 85 percent of grants [explicitly targeted](#) minority groups, including Muslims, LGBTQ Americans, Black Lives Matter activist, immigrants, and refugees.

Ultimately, CP3's grant program and the organizations it funds pose a threat to core American values across all political lines. The TVTP framework presumes it can predict violence based on ideas and ideology, subjective behavior, and personal status. CP3 stigmatizes and delegitimizes innocent people based on what they think or who they know. Expansive criteria for who might be considered dangerous invites easily abused discretion into violence prevention. The program is antithetical to the rights of all Americans to worship, associate, and believe freely as secured by the First Amendment.

For those reasons, the undersigned organizations ask that your committees and Congress eliminate funding to CP3 and its grant program.

Sincerely,

Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law
Defending Rights & Dissent
Muslim Justice League
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
Activated Massachusetts African Community
American Friends Service Committee
American Muslim Empowerment Network (AMEN)
Carceral Tech Resistance Network
Center for Constitutional Rights

Coalition for Civil Freedoms
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)
Demand Progress Action
Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC)
Fight for the Future
For the Binat
Friends of Human Rights
HEART
Islamophobia Studies Center
MPower Change Action Fund
MSA West
Muslim Advocates
Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative (MuslimARC)
Muslim Counterpublics Lab
Muslims for Just Futures
Muslims for Liberty
New York Muslim Organizing Collective
No Separate Justice
Poligon Education Fund
Project South
Restore The Fourth
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)
South Asian Network
Students United for Palestinian Rights - Michigan State University
Surveillance Resistance Lab
Surveillance Technology Oversight Project
The Sikh Coalition
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
Vigilant Love
X-Lab
18 Million Rising

Cc:

Hon. Chris Murphy, Chair, Subcommittee on Homeland Security, Senate Committee on Appropriations
Hon. Dave Joyce, Chair, Subcommittee on Homeland Security, House Committee on Appropriations
Hon. Katie Britt, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Homeland Security, Senate Committee on
Appropriations
Hon. Henry Cuellar, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Homeland Security, House Committee on
Appropriations
Hon. Gary Peters, Chair, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Hon. Mark Green, Chair, House Committee on Homeland Security
Hon. Rand Paul, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Hon. Bennie Thompson, Ranking Member, House Committee on Homeland Security