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September 16, 2020

U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 3 million members of the National Education Association—educators who are dedicated to preparing students to treat all people with respect and live in a diverse, interdependent world—we urge you to vote YES on H. Res. 908, “Condemning all forms of anti-Asian sentiment as related to COVID-19.” Votes on this issue may be included in the NEA’s Report Card on the 116th Congress.

Unfortunately, some in our nation’s leadership have used the pandemic to stoke division in America, even as the death toll rises and communities and families struggle to cope with the fallout from COVID-19. President Trump has referred to coronavirus as the “Chinese virus,” the “Wuhan virus,” and the “Kung flu.” He has continued to use these terms—and prompted others to use them—despite the surge in violence against Americans of Asian descent. This is irresponsible and contrary to the values we espouse and teach our children.

We must be unified to respond to and defeat COVID-19, but use of these reckless terms—especially by the president and other national leaders—only encourages us to turn against each other. In fact, the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council reported in August that members of AAPI communities have been the targets of more than 2,500 racist incidents since the council launched its “Stop AAPI Hate” project in March. Here is just one example: An Asian American woman in Marietta, Ga. was in line at a pharmacy when a customer confronted her, sprayed Lysol on her, and yelled, “You’re the infection! Go home! We don’t want you here!” No one came to the woman’s aid.

In our current climate, words can easily incite violent—even deadly—acts. Such xenophobia must be condemned, especially during an unprecedented public health crisis. We must stand together to affirm that these words and actions do not represent who we are. We urge you to vote YES on H. Res. 908.

Sincerely,

Marc Egan  
Director of Government Relations  
National Education Association