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October 13, 2017

Director Christopher Wray
Federal Bureau of Investigation
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20535-0001

Dear Director Wray:

We write to express our concern over the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) recent "Intelligence Assessment" dated August 3, 2017, entitled "Black Identity Extremists Likely Motivated to Target Law Enforcement Officers." We also request a briefing on the origins of this research and the FBI's intended next steps now that this assessment has been performed and disseminated.

As you are no doubt aware, the FBI has a troubling history of utilizing its broad investigatory powers to target black citizens. During the 1960s, Director J. Edgar Hoover used the Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) to surveil and discredit civil rights activists and members of the Black Panther Party. For example, the FBI falsified letters in an effort to blackmail Martin Luther King, Jr. into silence. Given this history, and given several concerning actions this Administration has taken on racial issues, Members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) are justifiably concerned about this FBI Assessment.

Unfortunately, this Administration has developed a pattern of statements and actions that are hostile to African Americans. The President and his advisors have at times failed to condemn Neo-Nazis and white supremacists. The President encouraged law enforcement personnel to use less restraint in dealing with individuals *suspected* of crimes. Lastly, the Attorney General has rolled back criminal justice reforms – a move that will disproportionately harm African Americans.

Against this backdrop, the Members of the CBC cannot help but be concerned about the aforementioned intelligence assessment. The FBI is responsible for investigating criminal activity and referring its findings to Department of Justice attorneys for prosecution. The intelligence assessment, citing only a handful of incidents since 2013, has concluded with "high confidence" that "Black Identity Extremists" are likely to target law enforcement based on "perceptions of police brutality against African Americans."

The assessment and the analyses upon which it is based are flawed because it conflates black political activists with dangerous domestic terrorist organizations that pose actual threats to law enforcement. It relies on a handful of obviously terrible incidents to paint black Americans who exercise free speech against witnessed police brutality as possible violent extremists. These broad characterizations can only serve to further erode trust between law enforcement officials and many of the black communities they serve, further inflaming an already tense and complicated dynamic. Local law enforcement may erroneously target non-violent but politically-engaged persons or groups because of this assessment. Our constituents continue to express their frustration about being ignored and being attacked for exercising their constitutionally-protected right to free speech to protest inequities across American institutions.

We are concerned that this assessment could lead the FBI to target black communities, and it is imperative that you come to meet with the 49 Members of the CBC to address our concerns. Please respond to this letter in writing by October 23, 2017, as many of our Members and constituents will interpret a lack of response as confirmation that the FBI intends to unfairly target African Americans. Thank you for your personal attention to this critical matter, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Cedric L. Richmond
Chair
Congressional Black Caucus

John Conyers, Jr.
Ranking Member
House Committee on the Judiciary



Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member
House Committee on Homeland Security

Elijah E. Cummings
Ranking Member
House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform