

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 28, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden  
The White House  
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Merrick Garland  
Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear President Biden and Attorney General Garland:

We write to urge you to establish an Office for Missing and Murdered Black Women and Girls within the Department of Justice (DOJ) to focus on this overlooked crisis affecting so many of our communities. According to the National Crime Information Center, Black women and girls make up 15% of the total female population in the United States but still made up nearly 34% of women reported missing in 2020. For young Black women 20 years of age or below, such disparities mean that while they are only 2% of the U.S. population, they made up more than 15% of missing persons, or around 80,000 individuals in 2022.<sup>1</sup> Every day, our Black mothers, sisters, daughters, and neighbors go missing. It is long overdue for both the Congress and the federal government to prioritize addressing this epidemic.

Last year, Rep. Omar introduced the Brittany Clardy Missing and Murdered Black Women and Girls Act, not only to provide hope but a clear path forward. Brittany Clardy, an 18-year-old woman, went missing from her home in St. Paul, Minnesota in 2013. Her family says they were initially brushed off by law enforcement about her disappearance.<sup>2</sup> Almost two weeks later, she was found murdered in the trunk of a car. [H.R. 6828](#) is named in her memory, and the legislation is modeled off of the Minnesota's state legislature bill, which created the nation's first state Office.<sup>3</sup> More states are taking notice, setting up their own taskforces and proposing their own dedicated offices. But, even with strong bipartisan support, some states like Wisconsin<sup>4</sup> have faced obstruction.

This complex issue deserves a whole-of-government approach led by your Administration to help all states protect and care for our most vulnerable communities. And there is a strong precedent for similar actions. In 2020, the Trump administration set up an interagency taskforce on missing and murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives.<sup>5</sup> The Department of Justice, Department of Interior, and Department of Health and Human Services took this first step before former President Donald Trump signed bipartisan bills into law to enhance

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1 National Crime Information Center, "2022 NCIC Missing Person and Unidentified Person Statistics," FBI, February 2, 2023, p. 5, <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/2022-ncic-missing-person-and-unidentified-person-statistics.pdf/view>.

2 NPR, "The first office for missing and murdered Black women and girls set for Minnesota," Dana Ferguson, May 30, 2023, <https://www.npr.org/2023/05/30/1178390294/minnesota-first-office-for-missing-and-murdered-black-women-and-girls>.

3 CBS News Minnesota, "First director of state's Missing and Murdered Black Women and Girls Office: 'Save one girl,'" Jennifer Mayerle, May 9, 2024, <https://www.cbsnews.com/minnesota/news/minnesota-missing-murdered-black-women-girls-office-director-named/>.

4 Wisconsin Watch, "Senator blocks task force on missing and murdered African American women and girls," Jack Kelly, March 4, 2024, <https://wisconsinwatch.org/2024/03/wisconsin-senate-assembly-black-women-girls-missing-murdered-bill/>.

5 Department of Justice, "Trump Administration Launches Presidential Task Force on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives," press release, January 29, 2020, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/trump-administration-launches-presidential-task-force-missing-and-murdered-american-indians>.

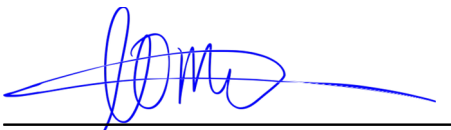
these efforts, led by then Representative Deb Haaland during her time in Congress.<sup>6</sup> We appreciate that your Administration, along with Interior Secretary Haaland, has demonstrated a strong commitment to Tribal communities dealing with such generational trauma and loss. We hope you can replicate this work and swiftly develop working groups and policy strategies to help Black communities manage these shared harms and suffering.

For all these reasons, we strongly urge you to create a leadership role and a dedicated unit within the DOJ to address such alarming disparities in violence and justice of our Black women and girls. Specifically, the DOJ should create an office to:

1. Provide legal expertise and policy counsel to the Attorney General on matters involving missing and murdered Black women and girls;
2. Develop administrative guidance and policy recommendations to improve data collection, analysis, and review of missing person and homicide cases of Black women and girls;
3. Establish a national advisory body of affected Black women and girls and their families;
4. Facilitate technical assistance for State, local, and Tribal law enforcement agencies and investigatory entities during active cases of missing and murdered Black women & girls;
5. Create a centralized depository and public dashboard for the tracking of missing and murdered Black women and girls.

It is past time for the United States to protect and support Black women and girls, and to give this systemic, atrocious problem the attention and prioritization it deserves. We appreciate your consideration of this critical matter and look forward to working together to pursue our shared values of community safety and criminal justice.

Sincerely,



Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress

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<sup>6</sup> Department of Justice, “Not Invisible Act: Overview,” <https://www.justice.gov/tribal/not-invisible-act>.