

June 30, 2020

District Attorney Peter Weir
Jefferson County District Attorney's Office
500 Jefferson County Pkwy
Golden, CO 80401

Dear District Attorney Weir,

The undersigned advocacy, civil rights, community, legal, and faith-based organizations are deeply saddened and troubled by the brutal attack on Mr. Lakhwant Singh on April 29, 2020. We write to express concern about this incident, based on the information that is publicly available indicating that Mr. Singh was attacked because of his actual or perceived race, color, religion, ancestry, or national origin, and urge you to consider that you have the evidence necessary to file felony hate crime charges against Mr. Singh's attacker, Eric Breemen, under Colorado's bias-motivated crime statute.

Mr. Singh, an identifiable Sikh who wears a turban and maintains an unshorn beard, is a resident and small business owner in Lakewood, CO. On April 29, Eric Breemen entered the store Mr. Singh owns with his wife, and began harassing the couple. He damaged numerous items within the store, shouted profanity, and told the Singhs to "go back to your country". Later, he also told law enforcement that he believed Mr. Singh was an "Arab". The Singhs repeatedly asked Breemen to leave; when he finally did, Mr. Singh went outside to the store's parking lot to take a photo of Breemen's license plate in order to report the harassment. Breemen continued screaming at Mr. Singh and then used his vehicle to ram Mr. Singh, throwing him several feet across the parking lot. While the extent and severity of Mr. Singh's medical condition is not yet known, he has not been home since this vicious attack and has a long road to recovery ahead.

By way of background, the Sikh religion is the fifth-largest organized religion in the world. Today, there are more than 500,000 Sikhs living in the United States--including a thriving community in Colorado. Sikhs are disproportionately targeted in bias-related incidents because they wear turbans and maintain unshorn hair (including facial hair) in accordance with their faith. According to the latest FBI Hate Crime Statistics Report, Sikhs are the third-most targeted religious group in the country; between 2017 to 2018, hate crimes nationally remained relatively the same, but hate crimes against Sikhs increased by 200 percent.

Hate crimes do not just impact an individual; rather, they impact the entire community. We stand with Lakhwant Singh and the Sikh community in calling for hate crime charges in this case against Eric Breemen under Colorado's bias motivation statute. Our goal is to ensure that the Jefferson County District Attorney's Office is committed to acknowledging hate when it occurs, prosecuting the offenders appropriately, and protecting our vulnerable groups from bigotry, hate and violence. Failure to address bias in one instance with one community is a failure to address it in all cases, as that further silences and marginalizes groups that experience bias-motivated violence and discourages them from reporting acts of violence committed against their communities. Thus, we share in the trauma Mr. Singh and the Sikh community are facing in this case. Doing justice in this case requires bringing hate crimes charges where the evidence supports it.

We respectfully urge you to ensure that justice is served for Mr. Lakhwant Singh and his family by fully investigating this case as a hate crime, and with evidence demonstrating the requisite

bias, filing felony hate crime charges against Eric Breemen, under Colorado's bias-motivated crime statute. Thank you for your consideration and attention. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact the Sikh Coalition's Legal Director, Amrith Kaur at legal@sikhcoalition.org or by phone at (847) 786 - 5839

Cc: Governor Jared Polis, Attorney General Phil Weiser, Mayor Adam Paul, US Attorney's Office: Bryan Fields, FBI: Special Agent Kristen Varel

Sincerely,

America Indivisible
American Muslim Empowerment Network (AMEN)
Anti-Defamation League Mountain States Region
Arab American Institute (AAI)
Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Colorado
Center for Disability Rights
Center for the Study of Hate & Extremism - California State University, San Bernardino
Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition
Colorado Muslim Society
Colorado Singh Sabha
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)
Denver Sikh Gurudwara
Gurughar Colorado Springs Inc.
Interfaith Alliance
Interfaith Alliance of Colorado
Islamic Networks Group (ING)
Islamophobia Studies Center
Matthew Shepard Foundation
Muslim Advocates
Muslim Community Network
National Council of Jewish Women
North Carolina Asian Americans Together (NCAAT)
Poligon Education Fund
Revolutionary Love Project
Sam Cary Bar Association
Sikh Coalition
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
South Asian Bar Association of Colorado
Subcontinental Drift