OFFICERS

John C. Yang; Chair; Advancing Justice | AAJC
Jeffrey Caballero; AAPCHO
Becky Belcore; NAKASEC
Seema Agnani; National CAPACD
David Inoue; JACL
Thu Nguyen; OCA

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

AAPI Data
Act to Change
Asian & Pacific Islander American Vote
Asian American Psychological Association
Asian American Scholar Forum
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance
Asian Pacific Americans Public Affairs Association
Asian Pacific Institute for Gender Based Violence
Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment Advocacy & Leadership
Asian & Pacific Islander Americans in Historic Preservation
Asian Real Estate Association of America
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations
Boat People SOS
Center for Asian American Media
Center for Asian Pacific American Women
Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement
Council of Korean Americans
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities
Filipino Young Leaders Program
Hindus for Human Rights
Hmong National Development Inc.
Japanese American Citizens League
Laotian American National Alliance
Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics
National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association
National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse and Harm Reduction
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging
National Association of Asian American Professionals
National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development
National Federation of Filipino American Associations
National Japanese American Memorial Foundation
National Korean American Service and Education Consortium
National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance
OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates
Papa Ola Lokahi
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund
South Asian Public Health Association
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
Stop AAPI Hate
The Asian/Pacific Islander American Chamber of Commerce & Entrepreneurship
The Sikh Coalition
United Territories of Pacific Islanders Alliance
Washington

NCAPA is a project of Tides Center

January 14, 2025

Senator John Thune
Majority Leader
United States Senate
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Rand Paul
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Gary Peters
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Oppose the Confirmation of Kristi Noem as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Dear Majority Leader Thune, Minority Leader Schumer, Chairman Paul and Ranking Member Peters,

On behalf of the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA), a national coalition of 43 Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) organizations with a network spanning across the United States, we write to strongly urge you to reject the nomination of Kristi Noem as the prospective incoming Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Our organizations, and the AANHPI communities we represent, are gravely concerned over Ms. Noem's current stances and past actions against immigrant communities and communities of color.

Historically, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders' experiences have been heavily impacted by U.S. immigration policies. From the earlier development and implementation of exclusionary policies, national origin quotas, to present day family-based immigration backlogs and immigration enforcement, AAPI individuals and families continue to feel the impact. In fact, two-thirds of all Asian Americans are foreign born and most Pacific Islanders in the United States are considered to be native born.[1] Our histories and lived experiences are diverse and unique. Many AAPI families trace their immigrant roots back for multiple generations, while others were displaced due to war in their home countries. Now, members of the AANHPI community continue to contribute their talents and skills as part of the workforce and economy. We urge policymakers to consider the perspectives and lived experiences of our AAPI communities when considering who will lead DHS, especially given DHS's authority over immigration enforcement.

Ms. Noem's longstanding history of anti-immigrant rhetoric and past actions against immigrant communities remains deeply troubling. During the first Trump Administration, Ms. Noem supported the President's Muslim Ban and called on the administration to halt acceptance of refugees from what she referred to as "terrorist controlled regions" – subjectively equating all individuals from varying regions around

the world seeking refugee status and relief as threats to the United States.[2] Such discriminatory statements from an individual who will be tasked with leading a federal agency responsible for the safety and security of communities and actual threats of national security are particularly troubling, especially for individual members and families within our communities who were separated and displaced as a result of the Muslim Ban of 2017 and those who have experienced and continue to face Anti-Asian hate following COVID-19.

For decades, the U.S. has been a global leader for accepting refugees and asylees. Such discriminatory rhetoric against individuals who are seeking or who have been granted status under humanitarian relief is also gravely concerning for members of our communities who have resettled into the United States. This is particularly true for the more than one million individuals granted refugee status from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos following the Southeast Asia Wars including those who worked alongside the U.S. in its fight for democracy.[3] Despite the availability of federal humanitarian programs and refugee assistance designed and intended to protect from harm, Ms. Noem has stated her refusal to allow immigrants to settle in the state of South Dakota during her time as governor. Ms. Noem has expressed, "My message to illegal immigrants…call me when you're American."[4] As the potential leader of an agency tasked with protecting against real life threats against border security, we find such past statements and actions against immigrant communities extremely troublesome.

We further find Ms. Noem's track record as Governor of South Dakota disconcerting and anticipate the harms that she will bring forth as the potential head of the Department of Homeland Security against immigrant and indigenous communities and people of color more broadly. For instance, in 2023, Ms. Noem took executive action on immigration enforcement during which she sent National Guard troops to aid in Governor Greg Abbott's policing of the border in Texas. Notably, Ms. Noem has used her authority to deploy troops to the southwest border at least five times despite low rates of actual apprehensions and suspected crimes.[5] Without further examples of concrete details of perceived and actual threats, Ms. Noem has further referred to immigration as an invasion without regard for the procedural due process rights that so many are entitled to in the United States.

We remain deeply concerned regarding Ms. Noem's statements on immigration, especially those targeted against Asian and Asian American communities, and the potential harms that will come underway in a Noem-led DHS. In 2024, Ms. Noem testified before the U.S. House Agriculture Committee focused on Chinese ownership of agricultural land. During her testimony, Ms. Noem stated, "I watched us as we sold citizenship to Chinese communist members of the Chinese Communist Party for investment into our processing systems. And now most of our processing systems and facilities are owned by the Communist Party or Chinese government. Now they are coming for our land."[6] As governor in 2024, Ms. Noem also signed HB 1231 into law which broadly prevents both foreign entities and foreign persons from owning land and places reporting requirements on certain entities.[7] Such broad and overreaching state-level alien land laws in the name of national security and threats posted by the CCP and the accompanying narrative and policies targeting and preventing individual citizens from purchasing land are harmful and will continue to produce subsequent chilling effects such as through discriminatory targeting.

We believe that the individual trusted to lead the Department of Homeland Security should be one that defends all Americans as opposed to benefitting just some Americans at the expense of others. Given Ms. Noem's track record, we remain gravely concerned that her leadership of the Department of Homeland Security will bring about further harm through additional anti-immigrant policies. We thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

The National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)

---

[1] *https://aapidata.com/featured/by-the-numbers-immigration/?mc_cid=61d6e78642&mc_eid=4c3b764cac#foreign-born-populations*

[2] *https://www.newsweek.com/kristi-noem-new-homeland-security-secretary-1984221*

[3] *https://searac.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/SEAA-Journeys_final.pdf*

[4] *https://thehill.com/homenews/state-watch/548255-noem-pledges-to-not-accept-illegal-immigrants-call-me-when-youre-an-american/*

[5] *https://news.sd.gov/news?id=news_kb_article_view&sysparm_article=KB0041779&sys_kb_id=199794e8872cc210327fb807cebb35b5&spa=1* and *https://apnews.com/article/mexico-kristi-noem-philanthropy-south-dakota-2300a97085df9f7fc641004960819c7b*

[6] *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O4oEWNoX1NQ*

[7] *https://mylrc.sdlegislature.gov/api/Documents/264011.pdf*