February 4, 2022

Speaker Nancy Pelosi  
1236 Longworth H.O.B.  
Washington, DC 20515

House Majority Whip Jim Clyburn  
274 Cannon H.O.B.  
Washington, DC 20515

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer  
1705 Longworth H.O.B.  
Washington, DC 20515

House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy  
2468 Rayburn H.O.B.  
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Repair Can’t Wait - Immediately Pass H.R. 40, the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader Hoyer, Majority Whip Clyburn, Minority Leader McCarthy, and Honorable Members of the House of Representatives:

On behalf of the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N’COBRA), the National African American Reparations Commission (NAARC), Human Rights Watch (HRW), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), organizational members of the Why We Can’t Wait Coalition,1 along with the undersigned 365 national, international, state, and local organizations, and over 40 leaders, activists, and celebrities, we urge Congress to immediately bring House Resolution (H.R.) 40, the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act, to a full vote on the House floor.

H.R. 40 has a record 215 members of Congress committed to voting “yes” when the bill comes to the House floor. With this level of support, it should pass the House, so long as Leadership sticks to public

promises to get behind it and advance the bill. People in the US are now more eager than ever to pull back the curtain on institutions to see whether they have helped to advance or stalled racial progress, and those institutions include the US Congress. As states, cities, and other institutions, including the state of California; Providence, Rhode Island; Burlington, Vermont; Tullahassee, Oklahoma; Greenbelt, Maryland; Detroit, Michigan; Evanston, Illinois; Georgetown University; the Jesuits; and others pursue reparations at an accelerated pace, it would be sheer irony for the federal government, which sanctioned the kidnapping and trafficking in human beings that slavery entailed, and maintained subsequent anti-Black laws and institutions, to continue to lag behind.

H.R. 40 would establish an expert commission to study the legacy of slavery and how the failure to address harms stemming from it have resulted in huge racial disparities between white and Black people in: the ability to accumulate wealth; to access health care, education, housing and employment opportunities; environmental outcomes; and policing, among other things. The commission would also recommend proposals for how to provide repair for what the study reveals. This bill does not authorize payments or any specific remedy. It simply creates a commission to study the problem, gather relevant information, extensively consult with impacted communities, and recommend solutions. Like the commission that investigated the forced relocation and wrongful incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II, H.R. 40 can help pave the way for a critical and truthful reckoning and accounting for past harms and the present harms that flow from them.

The US Congress made history when, on April 14, 2021, the House Judiciary Committee voted to move H.R. 40 to the House Floor for full consideration, the first time in the bill’s 32-year history. Eight months later, as the enduring terror of white supremacy looms, the Covid-19 pandemic widens racial inequality, police continue to heinously kill Black people at alarming rates, and legislators continue to introduce scores of new Jim Crow–like voter restrictions, passing H.R. 40 couldn’t be more urgent. While we recognize the importance of symbolic measures, such as the speedy and nearly unanimous vote in the House of Representatives this year to establish Juneteenth as a federal holiday, the House must similarly act without further unjustified delay to bring H.R. 40 to the floor for a vote so that a substantive study can proceed that can bring about real change.

Even amidst battles against truth about the country’s founding, there is a growing acceptance that the legacies of settler colonialism and of enslavement can be felt today and that racism impacts everyone. According to a recent Citigroup study, not addressing the racial wealth gap has cost the US economy up

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to $16 trillion over the past 20 years. Revealing, through a federal commission, how federal policy has contributed to creating these inequities and their profound impact, could unify people across demographics and make clear that addressing and repairing these harms will benefit everyone.

The world is waiting to see how the US government makes amends and repairs the harm stemming from slavery, but every year the same message gets sent: Black votes matter, but not Black lives. Continued investments in good public policy measures, such as tax cuts for families with children and investments in affordable housing in the Build Back Better Act, are important, but public policy alone does not address past harm and has never been enough to end contemporary forms of racism, dehumanization, and exclusion.\(^5\)

Undoing racial injustice and achieving racial healing requires remedy and repair, a principle well established in international human rights law.\(^6\)

We, the undersigned organizations, firmly believe that addressing pervasive anti-Black racism and providing reparations, long overdue, cannot wait another day, month, year, or decade. We are in a once-in-a-lifetime moment that we cannot let slip away if we are to begin the process of righting the country’s wrongs. Voters will remember what Congress did and did not do when it had the power to act. It has that power now. It should ask itself: How do we want history to remember us?

We hope that we can count on you to be on the right side of history and move Congress to take this meaningful first step in the right direction. We ask that you bring H.R. 40 to the House floor for a vote as soon as possible.

We appreciate your time and consideration. If you have additional questions or need additional information, please contact Laura Pitter, Deputy Director of the US Program at Human Rights Watch, at pitterl@hrw.org and Kenniss Henry, Legislative Commission Chair for N’COBRA at ncobralegiscom@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

AAPI Equity Alliance
Action for Racial Justice
ADL (the Anti-Defamation League)
Adorers of the Blood of Christ, US Region
Advancement Project, National
African American Community Service Agency
African American Redress Network
African Ancestral Society
AFRICANS DESERVE REPARATIONS NOW!
Allard K. Lowenstein International Human Rights Clinic, Yale Law School
Alliance of Baptists
All Souls Movement

\(^5\) Ibid.

Chicago Benedictines for Peace
Children’s Defense Fund
The Church of St Luke and St Matthew, Brooklyn NY
Church World Service
City of New Bern
Clean, Healthy, Educated, Safe & Sustainable Community, Inc.
Coalition for Economic Empowerment, Jackson, MS
Code Switch: Restorative Justice for Girls of Color
Collaborating Voices Foundation
Color Of Change
Coming To The Table
Coming to The Table – Virginia Historic Triangle
Common Talks Consulting
Community Change Inc
Community Of Hope AME Church
Congregation B’nai Israel Tikkun Olam Committee
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Congregation of St. Joseph - Justice Team
Creative Acts
Decolonizing Wealth Project
Democrats Abroad Reparations Task Force
Densho
Drug Policy Alliance
18 Million Rising
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)
The Episcopal Church
European Network of People of African Descent (ENPAD)
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Faith Action Network
Faith for Black Lives
Faith in Action Bay Area
Faith in Action National Network
Faith in New Jersey
Family Equality
Fellowship of Reconciliation, Atlanta/Georgia Chapter
FirstRepair
First Unitarian Society of Denver, Racial Justice Project
Franciscan Action Network
Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart
François-Xavier Bagnoud (FXB) Center for Health and Human Rights at Harvard University
The Friends Committee on National Legislation
Friends of Minidoka
Fund for Reparations Now
George Jackson University
Georgia NOW
The Graduate Assembly of the University of California, Berkeley
Granite State Organizing Project
Haley House, Inc.
Harriet Tubman Center for Freedom and Equity
Hawai’i Institute for Human Rights
Hue of My Brown
Human Rights Watch
ICNA Council for Social Justice
Incarcerated Nation Network
Indigenous Solidarity Network
Institute for Justice & Democracy in Haiti
Institute of the Black World (IBW)
Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center - Seattle, WA
International Black Women's Congress
International Center for Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma
International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ)
Irish for Racial Justice
IU South Bend Civil Rights Heritage Center
Jacober/Kuehner Fund
Jade Jewel Education Associates
Japanese American Citizens League (JACL)
Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), Berkeley Chapter
Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), Boise Valley Chapter
Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), Cincinnati Chapter
Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), Dayton Chapter
Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), DC Chapter
Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), Florin Chapter
Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), Idaho Falls Chapter
Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), Philadelphia Chapter
Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), Portland Chapter
Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), Puyallup Valley Chapter
Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), San Diego Chapter
Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), San Jose Chapter
Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), Seabrook Chapter
Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), Seattle Chapter
Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), Sequoia Chapter
Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), St. Louis Chapter
Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), Twin Cities Chapter
Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), Watsonville-Santa Cruz Chapter
Japanese American Families for Justice
Japanese American Memorial Pilgrimages
Japanese American National Museum
Japanese American Service Committee (JASC)
Johnson & Klein, PLLC
Justice & Beyond
Justice or Greenwood
Justis Connection
KC Reparations Coalition
King Boston/ TBF
Know Thyself, PC
Lake Street Church
Lamar Legal PLLC
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Leadership Team of the Felician Sisters of North America
LEAD Filipino
League of Conservation Voters
Let My People Vote
Liberation Ventures
Loat River Racial Justice
MakeItPlain.com
Manzanar Committee
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
The Massachusetts Against Solitary Confinement (MASC) Coalition
The Matthew Shepard Foundation
Meriden Congregational Church, UCC
Messiah Baptist Church, Yonkers NY
Mihara Associates
Missouri Faith Voices, A Faith in Action Federation
MK Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence
Morgan State University
NAACP
National Action Network (NAN)
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National African American Reparations Commission (NAARC)
National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA)
National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse
National Birth Equity Collaborative
National Black Cultural Information Trust, Inc.
National Black Justice Coalition
National CAPACD – National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N’COBRA)
N’COBRA – Atlanta
N’COBRA – Baton Rouge
N’COBRA – Chicago
N’COBRA – Cincinnati
N’COBRA – Dallas
N’COBRA – Detroit
N’COBRA – Evanston
N’COBRA – Indianapolis
N’COBRA – Kansas City
N’COBRA – Miami
N’COBRA – Milwaukee
N’COBRA – New England
N’COBRA – Philadelphia
National Conference of Black Lawyers (NCBL)
National Consumers League
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)
National Council of Churches
National Council of Jewish Women
National Federation of Filipino American Associations
National Health Care for the Homeless Council
National Health Law Program
National Homelessness Law Center
National Immigration Project (NIPNLG)
National Japanese American Memorial Foundation (NJAMF)
National LGBT Cancer Network
National LGBTQ+ Bar Association
National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
National Organization for Women
National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance
National Urban League
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Network NOVA
New American Leaders Action Fund
New Mexico & El Paso Interfaith Power and Light
Next Generation Action Network (NGAN)
The Nia Foundation
Nihonmachi Outreach Committee
Nikkei for Civil Rights & Redress
Nikkei Progressives
North Carolina Asian Americans Together (NCAAT)
North Carolina Council of Churches
Northshore Social Justice Action Group
OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates
OPAWL - Building AAPI Feminist Leadership in Ohio
Our Revolution
The Outgivers Ministries
OutNebraska
Pacific Community Ventures
Pax Christi USA
People For the American Way
PFLAG National
Positive Women's Network-USA
Powerful Community Church
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A), Office of Public Witness
Progressive Democrats of America
ProJect Access To A-Free-Ka
Racial Justice Rising
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
Reimagining America Project
Renton Regional Community Foundation
Reparation Education Project
Reparations Circle Denver
Reparations4Slavery.com
Reparations Pledge
The Reparations Project
RESULTS
Revitalization Strategies
Richmond Hill
RocACTS
Sacred Heart Community Services
St. Ann & the Holy Trinity Church and Pro Cathedral
Saint Paul's Carroll Street (Episcopal)
San Francisco Bay Area Day of Remembrance Organizing Committee
San Francisco Black & Jewish Unity Coalition
San Francisco Friends, Sisters of Mercy
San Jose Nikkei Resisters
Scepter Of Righteousness Inc.
School Sisters of Notre Dame, Central Pacific Province
Sealing Records
Self Grow
The Sentencing Project
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – Annapolis and Anne Arundel County
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – Biddeford-Saco
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – Boston
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – Buffalo
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – Central Vermont
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – Clackamas Co., Oregon
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – Historic Triangle Chapter
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – Indianapolis
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – Kansas City
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – Lakes Area
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – Marin
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – Midcoast
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – North Central Mass
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – Northeast Ohio
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – Northern New Mexico
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – NYC
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – ROC
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – Sacramento
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – Sacred Heart
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – San Francisco
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – Santa Barbara
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – Santa Cruz County
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – San Diego
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – Southern Maine
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – Springfield-Eugene
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – Southeast PA
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – St. Johns Chapter, Portland, OR
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – Westchester, NY
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – Whatcom
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – Tucson
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – Twin Cities (SURJ-TC)
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – Vashon-Maury
Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – Ventura County
SIREN
Sisters of Bon Secours, USA
Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Office of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Congregational Leadership
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Western Province Leadership
Sisters of Charity of New York
Sisters of the Humility of Mary
Sisters of Mercy
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur
Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
Sisters of St Joseph, Brentwood
Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chestnuts Hill, Philadelphia, PA
Srs. of St. Joseph of Cluny USA
Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester, NY
Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary
Society of Helpers
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
South Bay Progressive Alliance
South Bay Youth Changemakers
South Carolina Christian Action Council
The Southern Poverty Law Center
SSJ-TOSF Social Justice Committee
Street Meet Company
Success Capital Organisation
Tadaima
The Taifa Group
Terence Crutcher Foundation
Third Presbyterian Church, Rochester NY
Tikkun Olam Committee and Reparations Committee of the Jewish Community of Amherst
Tule Lake Committee
3GEN Construction Services
TopNotch Strategies, LLC
Treatment Action Group
Tsuru for Solidarity
Ubuntu Village Works LLC
UMass Amherst
UNESCO Inclusive Policy Lab | People of African Descent & SDGs E-Team
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalists for Social Justice
United Church of Christ
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
United Parents Against Lead (UPAL)
University Network for Human Rights
URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity
USC Gould School of Law International Human Rights Clinic
USC Shinso Ito Center for Japanese Religions and Culture
Vera Institute of Justice
VOICE Buffalo
Wesley United Methodist Church
WESPAC Foundation, Inc.
We The Village, Inc.
Where Is My Land
White People 4 Black Lives
Why We Can’t Wait Coalition
Woke Vote
Women’s Initiative Supporting Health
Women's Law Project
Woodhull Freedom Foundation
W Pa Black Political Assembly
Young Initiative on the Global Political Economy

Individuals

Father Cincere Allah, NGE
Thelma Bataille
Carol Beck, Elementary level Educator, Denver Green School
Natalia Cordova, Actor
Ms. Rosario Dawson, Actor
Jeffrey L. Edison, Attorney and Counsellor, National Conference of Black Lawyers, Michigan Chapters
The Robert G Fasick Jr Family
Dr. Jeffrey Fishman, Ph.D.
Frances Fisher, Actress/Activist
Mr. Bruce Folsom, San Francisco Friends Meeting
Danny Glover, Actor
Kathryn Guta, R.N.
Chelsea Handler, Comedian
Justin Hansford, Executive Director, Thurgood Marshall Civil Rights Center
Robin Harris, Candidate, N’COBRA and Green Party of Florida
Meghan Harwood, Student, Organizer, Public Servant, Standing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ)
Gerald Hunt, Treasurer, South Bay Progressive Alliance
Ms. Jennifer J Jones
Bridget Keaveney, Norman Y. Mineta Policy Fellow, Japanese American Citizens League, San Francisco
Mrs. Tamika Mapp, New York Democrat State Committeewoman 68th AD
Ms. Jo Elaine Akemi Matsumoto, Seattle JACL
Ms. Anne McAndrew
Sister Donna McGartland, Sisters of St Francis
David Pickett, Ruling Elder
Martha Porter, Teacher, Manzanar Committee
Alyssa Milano, Actor
Sister Rosemary Riggie, Sisters of St. Mary of Namur
Mark Ruffalo, Actor
Brother Todd Saddler, Ithaca Catholic Worker
Ajamu Sankofa, Activist, NY Chapter: National Conference of Black Lawyers
Susan Sarandon, Actor
Laurie Schecter
Dr. Geoffrey Shaskan, Poor People’s Campaign
Melisande Short-Colomb, AA Redress Network
Robin Rue Simmons, First Repair
Sister Donna Stephenson, Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities
George Takei, Actor
Rev. Adam Russell Taylor
Mr. James B. Thompson
Shirley Thompson
Professor Eric Wiebelhaus-Brahm, University of Arkansas at Little Rock
Mrs. Lois Williams-Norman, Shades of Sisterhood
Sister Veronica Wood, Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities
Sharon Yamato, Writer/Filmmaker
Mr. Ryan Yoshikawa, Japanese American Citizens League