Michael E. Horowitz  
Inspector General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Suite 4706  
Washington, D.C. 20530-0001

June 21, 2016

RE: Call for Inspector General Investigation into Asian American espionage-related cases

Dear Mr. Horowitz,

As leading Asian American and Pacific Islander, civil rights and civil liberties organizations, we are writing to you to express concern over the recent pattern of Asian American and Pacific Islander scientists being arrested and indicted by federal law enforcement for espionage-related crimes, only to later have all charges against them dropped. We are requesting an independent investigation into the policies and practices that led to this apparent pattern and practice of wrongful prosecutions, and in particular whether there is—or has been—any improper reliance on race, ethnicity, or national origin.

As you may be aware, a 60 Minutes report that aired on May 15, 2016 highlighted the human cost of wrongful prosecution on Temple University Physics Department Chair Dr. Xiaoxing Xi, National Weather Service hydrologist Sherry Chen, and their families. Both were subjected to improper treatment by federal law enforcement and were publicly accused of spying for China before charges were dropped. These prosecutions caused them to suffer financially, professionally, and psychologically and upended their everyday lives.

These and other cases raise concerns that investigators and prosecutors may be rushing into indictments targeting of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. We are disappointed that there has still been no independent investigation or explanation regarding these cases, despite numerous requests from Members of Congress, prominent scientists and engineers, civil rights and civil liberties organizations, and the editorial boards of The New York Times and The Philadelphia Inquirer.

We support the recent request by Members of Congress urging you to lead a full and independent investigation regarding the apparent pattern and practice of minorities being singled out for arrest and indictment by federal officials. We firmly believe that otherwise innocent actions by Americans must not become suspicious simply because of the person's ethnic surname or perceived national origin. As 60 Minutes reported, these investigations have caused a chilling effect on Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders and the scientific and academic communities. An independent investigation by you, as Inspector General, into the apparent pattern and practice of targeting Asian American and Pacific Islander scientists would help address the communities’ concerns of profiling, implicit bias, and academic freedom.
Thank you for your attention to this request. If you have any questions, please contact Aarti Kohli at Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Asian Law Caucus (aartik@advancingjustice-alc.org).

Sincerely,

Asian Americans Advancing Justice
National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA)
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)
OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates

Anti-Defamation League
APABA Maryland
APABA Tampa Bay
Arab American Institute
Arizona Asian American Bar Association
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Asian American Bar Association of Greater Chicago
Asian American Bar Association of Ohio
Asian American Bar Association of the Greater Bay area
Asian American Criminal Trial Lawyers Association
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)
Asian American Psychological Association
Asian Americans United
Asian Bar Association of Sacramento
Asian Law Alliance
Asian Pacific American Bar Association for the Greater Washington D.C. Area (APABA-DC)
Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Central Ohio
Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Colorado
Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Los Angeles County
Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Pennsylvania (APABA-PA)
Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Silicon Valley
Asian Pacific American Bar Association of South Florida
Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Virginia
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO (APALA)
Asian Pacific American Women Lawyers Alliance
Asian Pacific Environmental Network
Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy and Leadership (APPEAL)
Bill of Rights Defense Committee/Defending Dissent Foundation
CAAAAV Organizing Asian Communities
Center for APA Women
Central California Asian Pacific American Bar Association
Chinese American Bar Association of Greater Chicago
Chinese American Citizens Alliance
Chinese for Affirmative Action
Chinese Progressive Association
Committee of 100
Connecticut Asian Pacific American Bar Association
Council on American-Islamic Relations
Creating Law Enforcement Accountability & Responsibility project (CLEAR) at CUNY School of Law
Japanese Americans Citizens League
Jewish Voice for Peace
Korean American Bar Association of Chicago
Leadership Education for Asian Pacificics, Inc. (LEAP)
Louisiana Asian Pacific American Bar Association
Michigan Asian Pacific American Bar Association (MAPABA)
Minnesota Asian Pacific American Bar Association (MNAPABA)
Missouri Asian American Bar Association
MPower Change
NAACP
NAPABA-Hawaii
NAPAFASA
National Filipino American Lawyers Association
National Korean American Service and Education Consortium (NAKASEC)
National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance (NQAPIA)
OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates Central VA Chapter
OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates, Greater Seattle
OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates, Greater Washington D.C. Chapter
OCA-GH
OCA-Greater Cleveland
OCA-New York
OCA-Sacramento
OCA-San Mateo
OCA-St. Louis
OCA-Wisconsin
Orange County Korean American Bar Association
Oregon Asian Pacific American Bar Association
SABA-Chicago
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
South Asian Bar Association of North America
South Asian Bar Association of Southern California (SABA-SC)
South Asian Bar Association of Washington
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
Southern California Chinese Lawyers Association
Tennessee Asian Pacific American Bar Association
Thai American Bar Association (TABA)
Vietnamese American Bar Association of Southern California