AG James Launches Hotline to Combat Coronavirus Hate Crimes and Xenophobic Rhetoric

*Individuals Who Have Experienced Hate Crimes and Bias-Based Incidents Are Encouraged to Call the Ongoing Hotline at 1-800-771-7755, or Email **Civil.Rights@ag.ny.gov***

NEW YORK – Attorney General Letitia James today announced the launch of a hotline for New Yorkers to report hate crimes and bias-based incidents. The hotline, which will continue indefinitely, comes in the wake of rising reports of harassment and assaults, as well as rhetoric against Asian Americans amidst the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

"As we face an unprecedented and uncertain time for New York, the United States, and the world, we must reiterate the fact that this pandemic does not give anyone an excuse to be racist, xenophobic, or biased," said **Attorney General James**. "No one should live in fear for their life because of who they are, what they look like, or where they come from. I encourage all victims of discriminatory actions stemming from this pandemic to contact my office. We will continue to work with local law enforcement to combat hate in all its insidious forms."

In the last week alone, there have been numerous reports in New York of Asian Americans being harassed or physically assaulted as a result of this pandemic. The last several weeks have also seen a rise in anti-Asian rhetoric through the use of terms such as "Chinese virus," creating a stigma around Asian communities. This comes on the heels of a record number of hate crimes over the past several months in New York, demonstrating the urgent need for action. The Attorney General's Office, in its commitment to combating these heinous acts, implores everyone, from everyday New Yorkers, to individuals at the highest levels of government, to stand united against hate, now more than ever.

"During this public health crisis, people are fighting for their lives – fighting to keep their families safe. Yet these incessant, irresponsible, and atrocious naming of COVID-19 as the "Chinese virus" or "Wuhan virus" is endangering the lives of Asian Americans. I thank Attorney General James for setting up this necessary hotline for New Yorkers to report coronavirus-related hate crimes or biased-based incidents," said **U.S. Representative Grace Meng**. "I have repeatedly called on public officials – from the President to the top Republican in the U.S. House of Representatives – to abstain from using derogatory language that demonizes Asian Americans. This must stop. Public officials – and the media – must speak truth to power and refrain from dabbling in misinformation or conspiracy theories. I'm urging all New Yorkers to come together, call virus the coronavirus, and report to the hotline those who would use this uncertain time to make racist, xenophobic or biased attacks."

“Long scapegoated and cast as "yellow peril", Asian-Americans are besieged on two fronts by the COVID-19 contagion, with outbreaks of ignorance and bigotry sometimes inflicting more harm than the virus itself,” said **State Senator John Liu**. “More and more hateful incidents are occurring, ranging from distasteful gestures to obnoxious name-calling to outright violence against Asian-Americans — and despicably condoned by the president himself. The battle against the coronavirus has actually brought out the best among New Yorkers but it is necessary to remind some not to let fear of the unknown devolve into irrational and inexcusable hate, and we thank beloved Attorney General Tish James for leading the charge on this front as well.”

“Currently our community is dealing with COVID-19, a global pandemic — but our community is also facing another virus: extreme anti-Asian xenophobia,” said **State Assembly Member Yuh-Line Niou**. “While we battle this crisis, it has become abundantly clear that the coronavirus does not discriminate based on race. Yet, people are using COVID-19 as an excuse to perpetuate racism and xenophobia throughout New York and the entire country. There have been so many reports of Asian Americans being attacked because they were just riding the subway or wearing a face mask. The attacks are hateful, and go out of their way to blame our community. It is important that we stand together and remain educated on the growing emergency. Together we must stop the spread of the unfounded harmful stereotypes and hateful words that people are using to demonize our Asian American community through thoughtful and reasonable discussions. Thank you to the Attorney General for setting up a hotline to address and to better support our community through this devastating time of unfounded xenophobia and hate crimes against our community.”

Although local law enforcement is responsible for criminally prosecuting these perpetrators, the Attorney General’s Office is taking on this issue in other ways, including connecting victims and impacted communities to available resources, launching civil investigations, and supporting local law enforcement, among other steps.

The Attorney General urges those experiencing hate crimes and bias incidences to report them by emailing the Attorney General’s Civil Rights Bureau at **civil.rights@ag.ny.gov**, or calling 1-800-771-7755.

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