



One Hundred Eighteenth Congress
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

June 5, 2023

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

The Committee on Homeland Security (Committee) is conducting oversight of the Department of Homeland Security's (Department) grant awards under the Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP) grant program, particularly those grants aimed at raising media literacy and online critical thinking initiatives. According to recent media reports, one TVTP grant recipient has a troubling history of working with groups and individuals that equate mainstream right-leaning organizations and movements with violent extremist organizations and even genocidal extremists.¹ We are concerned about how the Department selects TVTP grant recipients and oversees the grant program. Such concerns are not limited to one side of the political aisle. In April, a coalition of 40 left-leaning organizations wrote to the top four members of the Senate and House appropriations committees that the "grant program and the organizations it funds pose a threat to core American values across all political lines."²

TVTP originated from the Obama administration's *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States* strategy, which was largely focused on countering al-Qa'ida and its affiliates.³ The initial grants, then named "Countering Violent Extremism Grants," were awarded in January 2017.⁴ The incoming Trump administration reviewed the grant program and decided to halt it.⁵ The program reemerged in 2019, when,

¹ See e.g., Aaron Kliegman, *University Program Linking Christians, Republicans to Nazis Granted DHS Funds Under 'Anti-Terror' Initiative*, FOX NEWS, May 25, 2023, <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/university-program-linking-christians-republicans-nazis-granted-dhs-funds-part-anti-terror-initiative>.

² Letter from Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law et al., to Sen. Patty Murray, Chair, S. Comm. on Appropriations et al. (Apr. 26, 2023) (on file with author), *available at* <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/coalition-letter-senate-calling-defunding-dhs-grants-program-targeted>.

³ Barack Obama, *EMPOWERING LOCAL PARTNERS TO PREVENT VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN THE UNITED STATES* (2011).

⁴ Press Release, U.S. Dep't of Homeland Sec., Statement by Sec'y Jeh Johnson Announcing First Round of DHS's Countering Violent Extremism Grants (Jan. 13, 2017) (on file with author), *available at* <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2017/01/13/statement-secretary-jeh-johnson-announcing-first-round-dhss-countering-violent>.

⁵ Peter Beinart, *Trump Shut Programs to Counter Violent Extremism*, THE ATLANTIC (Oct. 29, 2018), <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/10/trump-shut-countering-violent-extremism-program/574237/>.

according to a media report, Department officials initially bypassed the White House budgeting process to secure funding for what are now called TVTP grants.⁶

The Biden administration expanded TVTP with an increased focus on domestic violent extremism, including “violent white supremacy,” and moved the program under the newly created Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3).⁷ The revived TVTP grants program added an explicit program objective on “increasing media literacy and online critical thinking initiatives.”⁸ These initiatives involve developing and delivering media literacy or online critical thinking education through standalone courses or integrated into a larger curriculum.⁹ Thirteen of the 43 grants made in fiscal year 2022 included media literacy and online critical thinking initiatives.¹⁰ Experts have raised concerns that the methodologies behind TVTP-funded initiatives use “overly broad indicators to identify individuals who are vulnerable to radicalization,” and have relatively unsuccessful track records.¹¹

To assist the Committee with its oversight into the Department’s TVTP grant awards, please provide the following documents and information as soon as possible, but no later than 5:00 p.m. on June 19, 2023:

1. All documents and communications referring or relating to the decision to add “media literacy and online critical thinking initiatives” to the TVTP grant program objectives in fiscal year 2020;
2. All documents and communications referring or relating to specific guidance on the Department’s assessment of TVTP grant recipient programs seeking to carry out “media literacy and online critical thinking initiatives,” from fiscal year 2022 to present;
3. All documents and communications referring or relating to the Department determination of TVTP grant recipients for fiscal year 2022 to present;
4. A document sufficient to list the panel of subject matter experts used to review top scoring applications, and a document sufficient to explain how the panel of subject matter experts were selected, from fiscal year 2022 to present;

⁶ Betsy Swan, *They Tried to Get Trump to Care About Right-wing Terrorism. He Ignored Them*, POLITICO (Aug. 26, 2020), <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/08/26/trump-domestic-extemism-homeland-security-401926>.

⁷ Press Release, U.S. Dep’t of Homeland Sec., DHS Creates New Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships and Additional Efforts to Comprehensively Combat Domestic Violent Extremism (May 11, 2021).

⁸ U.S. DEP’T OF HOMELAND SEC., NOTICE OF FUNDING AND OPPORTUNITY (NOFO): FISCAL YEAR 2020 TARGETED VIOLENCE AND TERRORISM PREVENTION (TVTP) GRANT PROGRAM (2020).

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention Grant Program*, U.S. DEP’T OF HOMELAND SEC., <https://www.dhs.gov/tvtpgrants> (last visited May 26, 2023).

¹¹ Bennett Clifford, Seamus Hughes, and Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens, *An Abridged History of America’s Terrorism Prevention Programs: Opposition Grows, Supporters Adapt*, LAWFARE (Dec. 20, 2020), <https://www.lawfareblog.com/abridged-history-americas-terrorism-prevention-programs-opposition-grows-supporters-adapt>.

5. A copy of the complete University of Dayton fiscal year 2022 TVTP grant application;
6. All documents and communications, including but not limited to, e-mail, internal memoranda, guidance, and programmatic criteria review results, referring or relating to the Department's decision to award the University of Dayton a fiscal year 2022 TVTP grant;
7. A copy of all quarterly progress reports and any other grant reports related to the University of Dayton fiscal year 2022 TVTP grant; and
8. Any and all Department, Federal Emergency Management Agency, or third-party evaluations of the University of Dayton fiscal year 2022 TVTP grant.

An attachment contains instructions for responding to this request. Please contact the Committee on Homeland Security Majority staff at (202) 226-8417 with any questions about this request.

Per Rule X of the U.S House of Representatives, the Committee on Homeland Security is the principal committee of jurisdiction for overall homeland security policy, and has special oversight functions of "all Government activities relating to homeland security, including the interaction of all departments and agencies with the Department of Homeland Security."

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



MARK E. GREEN, MD
Chairman



DAN BISHOP
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations,
and Accountability



AUGUST PFLUGER
Chairman
Subcommittee on Counterterrorism

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Law Enforcement and Intelligence

Encl.

cc: The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson, Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Glenn Ivey, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Accountability

The Honorable Seth Magaziner, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Counterterrorism, Law Enforcement, and Intelligence