



April 1, 2020

Senator John Cornyn
517 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Cornyn:

On behalf of the Asian Pacific Interest Section (APIS) of the State Bar of Texas, the Asian American Bar Association of Houston (AABA), the Austin Asian American Bar Association (AAABA) and the Dallas Asian American Bar Association (DAABA), we urge you to publicly retract your recent statements regarding the people of Chinese origin in the context of the Coronavirus Disease of 2019 (COVID-19). On a conference call on Wednesday, March 18, 2020, you stated that:

“China is to blame because the culture [sic] where people eat bats and snakes and dogs and things like that. These viruses are transmitted from the animal to the people, and that’s why China has been the source of a lot of these viruses like SARS, like MERS, the swine flu, and now the coronavirus.”

During these uncertain and anxious times, citizens of Texas look to you for comfort and guidance. Instead, your statements may have an opposite effect as they play into stereotypes about the eating habits of Chinese people. In fact, many Asian American restaurants throughout Texas have lost significant business due to xenophobic stereotypes similar to the ones you articulated. Also, stirring xenophobic sentiments through inflammatory statements like the above does nothing to maintain the public trust and need for humanity, and further may stoke attitudes and behavior that could put Asian-Americans in physical danger. As you may be aware, there have been several recent incidents of anti-Asian hate crimes such as on March 14, 2020, “a man was arrested after [stabbing a Burmese man and his young son](#) in a Sam’s Club in Midland, Texas. (Graphic [photos on social media](#) show the boy with a huge gash reaching from behind his ear all the way across to his eye.)”¹

Public health experts and the World Health Organization have consistently clarified that COVID-19 (as well as SARS, MERS or the swine flu, for that matter) has no correlation to ethnicity – in fact, the virus does not take ethnicity into account at all – as evidenced by its accelerating presence in countries around the globe. Unfortunately, Americans of all backgrounds have been and are being affected by COVID-19, and instead of making divisive remarks, we should be united as one country during these unprecedented times.

¹ B. Wong, ‘For Asian Americans, There Are Two Pandemics: COVID-19 And Daily Bigotry’, *Huffpost*, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/asian-american-racism-coronavirus_1_5e790a71c5b63c3b64954eb4.



Thank you for your consideration. We trust that you will use your platform as our U.S. Senator to encourage all Texans to unify together and not use your influential position to point blame, which could lead certain bad actors to use your remarks to harm Asian Americans. We look forward to hearing from your office regarding your response on this matter.

Sincerely,

Paul Yin

Paul Yin
APIS Chair

Judith Kim

Judith S. Kim
President, AABA

Ranjeev Singh

Ranjeev K. Singh
President, AAABA

Andrew G. Spaniol

Andrew G. Spaniol
President, DAABA