

#NoPVEinCA

Governor Gavin Newsom
1303 10th Street
Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

May 14, 2019

Governor Newsom,

Together and in solidarity, the undersigned statewide and national coalition of community-based and advocacy organizations call on you to reject and dismantle the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services' ("Cal OES") Preventing Violent Extremism ("PVE") program. PVE is an egregious attempt to target Muslim, Black, and Brown communities across California, and it has no place in a state committed to the inclusion and support of all communities.

Cal OES, through funding from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security ("DHS"), is disbursing nearly \$625,000 to groups around the state to leverage their relationships with Muslim, refugee, Black, and Latinx communities in a misguided attempt to subvert "violent extremism," particularly among youth and immigrants. Cal OES's PVE program is modeled on federal Countering Violent Extremism ("CVE") frameworks designed by agencies like DHS and the FBI. CVE and PVE are premised on the false and stereotype-laden assumption that Muslim, refugee, Black, and Latinx communities are inherently prone to "extremism," "radicalization," and violence. They are part and parcel of discriminatory surveillance, profiling, and mapping programs targeting marginalized communities throughout the country, fueled by Islamophobia, anti-Blackness, and xenophobia. We therefore ask that you categorically reject any and all CVE and PVE programs in the state, and quickly dismantle those under your purview like the Cal OES PVE program.

CVE and PVE are entirely antithetical to California's core values, as expressed through state laws like SB 31 and SB 54, both of which seek to protect our state's communities of color and undocumented immigrants. These laws protect from law enforcement overreach the very same communities CVE and PVE target for law enforcement scrutiny. This is deeply hypocritical. As noted, Cal OES' PVE grants are funded by DHS, an agency known to view and interface with immigrant, Black, Brown, and Muslim communities through a lens of suspicion and xenophobia, leading to disproportionate rates of criminalization. This is why California has taken measures like SB 54 and SB 31 to protect its residents from federal agencies whose discriminatory actions have uprooted families and destroyed communities. Instead, programs like PVE and CVE do just the opposite through partnerships with federal law enforcement, whether through mandated referrals, information sharing, or the adoption of federal "indicators" of "extremism."

PVE and CVE programs are often deceptively framed as "public health" and "youth" programs that offer mental health and social services to marginalized communities. Such

a false framing only attempts to mask CVE and PVE's true objectives: to surveil, profile, and collect intelligence on Muslim, immigrant, and Black and Brown communities. Moreover, despite the over decade of experience with CVE and PVE-like programs both in the U.S. and abroad, such as the U.K.'s "Prevent" program, there is no evidence that these programs predict or reduce "violent extremism." To the contrary, they stigmatize the very communities they purport to help, making them less likely to seek legitimate social services for fear it will lead to unwarranted law enforcement scrutiny.

PVE and CVE programs are constitutionally suspect, impinging on freedom of religion, association, and political and cultural expression. They also lead to the erosion of vital trust between community leaders and the communities they serve, as these leaders and their organizations are forced into positions where they must choose between cooperating with PVE or CVE programs or risk losing critically needed funding or other support. Such use of state power is counterproductive to any purported goals of CVE and PVE programs and leads to deep distrust within communities, furthering their marginalization and increasing their vulnerabilities.

As one example of the harmful and stigmatizing nature of PVE and CVE programs, we draw your attention to one particularly egregious grant issued by Cal OES, referred to as the "BRAVE-Teacher Training" program. This grant will train teachers in San Bernardino City Unified School District ("SBCUSD") to "identify youth risk factors and behaviors that may be associated with violent extremism." In a thinly disguised attempt to garner legitimacy, Cal OES is funding a Muslim-led organization to develop and provide these trainings, presumably to both target the small but visible Muslim community in the region as well as to stoke continuing anxieties over the 2015 San Bernardino attack. SBCUSD, however, is a district where nearly 90% of the student population is low-income and Black or Latinx. While students of color all over the country are subjected to disproportionate rates of school discipline and criminalization, Cal OES and SBCUSD intend to weaponize teachers against the very students they should mentor and champion, trained instead to watch over and screen them for markers of "extremism." The BRAVE-Teacher Training program can only be read to send the following deeply offensive message: that low-income students of color are purportedly more prone to "violence" and "extremism" and must therefore be surveilled, by their teachers no less, to ensure community safety. We reject such a narrative, and all narratives that for too long have subjected communities of color, especially youth of color, to second-class citizenship, state surveillance, and state violence.

For all of these reasons, the undersigned coalition of California and national organizations demand that you immediately de-fund all organizations receiving money as part of Cal OES's PVE program, and that you reject and dismantle all PVE and CVE programs in the state of California.

Signed in solidarity,

Vigilant Love
MSA West
MPower Change
CAIR California

ACLU of California
Asian Americans Advancing Justice-
ALC
Asian Americans Advancing Justice-LA

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Alianza Sacramento
American Friends Service Committee
American Friends Service Committee - Los Angeles
American Muslim Voice Foundation
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
API Equality-LA
Arab American Civic Council
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council
Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI)
California Immigrant Policy Center
Campaign to TAKE ON HATE - CA
Central American Resource Center - CARECEN of Northern CA
Chinese for Affirmative Action
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
Courage Campaign
Defending Rights & Dissent
Demand Progress Action
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)
Esperanza Community Housing Corporation
Faith In Action Bay Area
Ground Game LA
Jakara Movement
Jetpac
Jewish Voice for Peace - Los Angeles
Majdal Center
Media Alliance
MLK Coalition of Greater Los Angeles
MSA CSUSB
Muslim Justice League
Muslim Student Association at UC Davis
Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative (MuslimARC)
National Immigration Law Center
NIAC Action
Nikkei for Civil Rights & Redress
Nikkei Progressives
Nikkei Resisters
Oakland Privacy
Orange County Communities Organized for Responsible Development (OCCORD)
Orange County Poor People's Campaign
Palestinian Youth Movement - Bay Area
Palestinian Youth Movement - Los Angeles, Orange County, and Inland Empire Chapter
Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans (PANA)
People Power Los Angeles | West Public Counsel
Resilience Orange County
Restore The Fourth
SAC ACT
San Jose Nikkei Resisters
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
South Asian Helpline & Referral Agency (SAHARA)
South Bay People Power
Southwest Asian & North Afrikan - Los Angeles (SWANA-LA)
Step Up! Sacramento
UC Berkeley MSA
UrbanProgressiveGear;
Veterans for Peace Los Angeles