

July 3, 2018
[Updated version – 7/4/18]

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Senate Minority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
House Minority Leader
233 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Minority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader Pelosi:

We, the undersigned, write to express our full support for Congresswoman Maxine Waters, who has recently been unjustly attacked by Republicans and Democratic Party leadership for speaking truth to power in challenging the Trump Administration to do the right thing by ending a “Zero Tolerance” immigration policy. Families seeking asylum from violence in their home countries are held in detention centers at the Mexican border and even worse, this inhumane immigration policy has separated over 2,000 children from their families.

Further, we write to share our profound indignation and deep disappointment over your recent failure to protect Congresswoman Waters from unwarranted attacks from the Trump Administration and others in the GOP. That failure was further compounded by your decision to unfairly deride her as being “uncivil” and “un-American.” In doing so, we believe this mischaracterizes her call to action for peaceful democratic assembly and the exercise of her constitutional rights to free speech in support of defenseless immigrant children and their families.

As one of the longest serving African American women, and the longest tenured woman of color, in Congress, Representative Waters has dedicated nearly 30 years of her life to federal public service. Prior to that, she was a member of the California State Assembly for 14 years, and has made it her life’s work to stand as a fearless advocate for women and unwavering champion for children, people of color and the poor.

Millennials of every race and creed revere Congresswoman Waters, whom they affectionately refer to as “Auntie Maxine.” She has been a foremost catalyst in encouraging a new generation to embrace the Democratic Party as the party that shares their values and speaks to the issues they care about most. Not supporting Congresswoman Waters hurts the party and threatens to erode an opportunity to continue to grow the Democratic Party with young leaders and voters.

For Black women, who are the most loyal base of the Democratic Party and the Progressive Movement, Congresswoman Waters is our shero. At this critical juncture in our nation’s history, Maxine Waters stands bold and unafraid, serving as a beacon of light and hope, her singular voice, speaking powerfully and urging the nation to the moral high ground of justice. She continues the phenomenal legacy of leadership of Black women who paved the way for all women to break glass ceilings including Congresswomen Shirley Chisholm, Barbara Jordan, Yvonne Braithwaite and Cardiss Collins; and civil rights icons---Dr. Dorothy I. Height, Dr. C. Delores Tucker, Reverend Willie Barrow, Mrs. Evelyn Lowery and many more.

Much hangs in the balance this fall, with all 435 House seats and 33 Senate seats up for grabs. Disparaging or failing to support Congresswoman Waters is an affront to her and Black women across the country and telegraphs a message that the Democratic Party can ill afford: that it does not respect Black women’s leadership and political power and discounts the impact of Black women and millennial voters.

We call on the Democratic Party leadership to step up and publicly support Congresswoman Waters, who has been receiving death threats for speaking truthfully and boldly in support of immigrant families and challenging the Trump Administration to end their inhumane and immoral policy that has yet to reunite over 2,000 children with their parents and continues to lock up refugees seeking asylum in the United States of America. We further believe Congresswoman Waters is owed an apology for your public comments insinuating she is “uncivil” and “un-American” for challenging the Trump Administration.

As women whose ancestors have lived through the incivility of slavery, segregation, and all other forms of discrimination, racism, and sexism, as people who have historically been told to “wait” for justice, for freedom, for our turn, we consider it an insult to characterize Ms. Waters’ call for the exercise of our constitutional rights as uncivil and un-American. We call on leaders of all persuasion to practice the art of civil discourse.

We believe you can make this right.

We expect, and she deserves, your support.

Sincerely,

Black Women Leaders and Allies
As of July 4, 2018

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Faye M. Anderson, PA
Honorable Angela Angel, MD
Shavon L. Arline-Bradley, DC
Jaladah Aslam, OH
Rev. J L Armstrong, CA
Diane Babineaux, MD
Monifa Bandele, NY
Rev. Kipp Banks, DC
Valerie Bates Horton, OH
Bishop George Battle, NC
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Sherry Bellamy, MD
Salandra Benton, FL
Rev. Traci D. Blackmon, MO

Donna Brazile, DC
Rev. Valerie Bridgeman, OH
Rhonda Briggins, GA
Clayola Brown, DC
Latosha Brown, GA
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Rev. Dr. Malcolm T. Byrd, PA
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C. Jacqueline Chaney, PA
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Angela Wilson-Turnbull, VA
Dr. Eunita Winkey, MD
Nicole Whitlow-Banks, MI
Juanita Wright, CA
Rev. Dr. S. Todd Yeary, MD
Turquoise Young, NY

cc: The Honorable Dick Durbin, Senate Minority Whip
The Honorable Patty Murray, Assistant Minority Leader
The Honorable Mark Warner, Senate Democratic Caucus Vice Chair
The Honorable Elizabeth Warren, Senate Democratic Caucus Vice Chair
The Honorable Tammy Baldwin, Senate Democratic Conference Secretary
The Honorable Chris Van Hollen, Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee Chair
The Honorable Steny Hoyer, House Minority Whip
The Honorable James E. Clyburn, Assistant Democratic Leader
The Honorable Joseph Crowley, House Democratic Caucus Chair
The Honorable Linda Sánchez, House Democratic Caucus Vice Chair
The Honorable Ben Ray Luján, Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Chair
The Honorable Tom Perez, Democratic National Committee Chair
The Honorable Keith Ellison, Democratic National Committee Deputy Chair

The Honorable Cedric Richmond, Chair, Congressional Black Caucus
Seema Nanda, Democratic National Committee CEO