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Director Susan Rice
Office of the Domestic Policy Council
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Director Rice,

As a coalition of 19 nationally recognized advocacy organizations, who advocate on behalf of Americans who are nonreligious and religiously unaffiliated, we would like to congratulate the new administration, the most diverse and trailblazing in history, on the swearing in of President Biden and Vice-President Harris. It is a remarkable and historic achievement, and we look forward to working with the new leadership.

We are heartened to see that President Biden is emphasizing the importance of equity and diversity, and is committed to reckoning with the barriers that limit access to federal programs, and we thank you for leading this interagency process. Our coalition stands ready to support these initiatives and would like to offer our input to ensure that all Americans are represented, including those who are nonreligious.

Religiously unaffiliated people (sometimes referred to as Nones) make up approximately 26 percent of the population,¹ and while there is not clear data on what percentage of the population identifies as nonreligious, estimates place the number at approximately one in ten Americans.² This points to one of the most significant issues our community faces: Nonreligious people, like other religious minorities, can be invisible to federal decision making because there are no federal population surveys that collect data on religious affiliation and disparities in areas like education, health, behavioral health, or the workplace. There are historical reasons for this absence of data, but without this information, it is challenging to assess and respond to the needs of nonreligious people and other religious minority groups such as Hindus, Jews, Sikhs, and Muslims.

The data that we do have, derived from organizational population research and community-based surveys, reveals a great disparity between how nonreligious people are treated in very religious areas, such as states like Utah and Mississippi, compared to more religiously tolerant areas such as Washington, DC. Unfortunately, especially in very religious areas, nonreligious people continue to face a great deal of religious oppression, experiencing shocking rates of discrimination in education, in the workplace, in healthcare, and many other areas.³ In addition to its direct impact, discrimination results in loneliness and social isolation, depression, and other negative health and education outcomes.

¹Pew Research Center (2015). *Religious Landscape Study: The Unaffiliated*. Available at <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/religious-tradition/unaffiliated-religious-nones/>.

²Pew Research Center (2015, November 3). *US Public Becoming Less Religious*. Available at <https://www.pewforum.org/2015/11/03/u-s-public-becoming-lessreligious/>.

³Frazer, S., El-Shafei, A., Gill, A.M. (2020). *Reality Check: Being Nonreligious in America*. Cranford, NJ: American Atheists. Available at www.secularsurvey.org.

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

American Atheists · American Ethical Union · American Humanist Association · Atheist Alliance of America · Black Nonbelievers, Inc. · Camp Quest Center for Inquiry · Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations · Ex-Muslims of North America · Foundation Beyond Belief · Freethought Society · Freedom from Religion Foundation · Hispanic American Freethinkers · Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers · Recovering from Religion · Secular Student Alliance · Secular Woman · Society for Humanistic Judaism · Unitarian Universalist Humanists



Atheists. Agnostics. Humanists. Americans.

This is why we were so frustrated by the Trump administration's blithe disregard for religious equality and its mean-spirited attempts to roll back civil rights protections and accessibility for social services, both for our community and many others. Our community firmly believes that separation of religion and government is the bedrock that makes religious freedom possible. While the previous administration did everything possible to undermine these important principles to favor specific, politically well-connected religious viewpoints, we are confident that you and President Biden will take action to restore a more balanced understanding of religious freedom.

As our nation recovers from the past four years, and work is done to repair the damage, we respectfully request that you consider us as a resource and bridge to those Americans who are nonreligious or religiously unaffiliated. Under the leadership of a new administration and Congress, we are as optimistic as ever regarding the future of our nation and look forward to doing our part.

Leadership from our coalition would value and appreciate the opportunity to sit down with you and members of your staff at your earliest convenience to discuss how we might be able to further this vital interagency initiative. In the meantime, please feel free to reach out to our coalition should you have any questions, or simply would like to learn more about the communities we represent.

In solidarity,

American Atheists
Atheist Alliance of America
American Humanist Association
Black Nonbelievers, Inc.
Camp Quest
Center for Inquiry
Cultural and Secular Jewish Organization (CSJO)
Ex-Muslims of North America
Hispanic American Freethinkers, Inc.
Foundation Beyond Belief (FBB)
Freedom from Religion Foundation
Freethought Society
Recovering from Religion
Secular Coalition for America
Secular Student Alliance
Society for Humanistic Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Humanist Association