



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-1501

January 29, 2021

Jennifer A. Hemingway  
Acting Chair, Capitol Police Board  
Sergeant at Arms and Doorkeeper  
U.S. Senate  
U.S. Capitol, Room S-151  
Washington, DC 20510

Timothy Blodgett  
Member, Capitol Police Board  
Acting Sergeant at Arms  
U.S. House of Representatives  
U.S. Capitol, Room H-124  
Washington, DC 20515

J. Brett Blanton  
Member, Capitol Police Board  
Architect of the Capitol  
U.S. Capitol, Room SB-16  
Washington, DC 20515

Yogananda Pittman  
Ex-Officio Member, Capitol Police Board  
Acting Chief of Police  
U.S. Capitol Police  
119 D Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Members of the Capitol Police Board:

I strongly oppose Acting U.S. Capitol Police Chief Yogananda Pittman's recommendation to install permanent fencing on the Capitol complex. More needs to be done to protect the Capitol complex, but the failure of Capitol security leaders to plan for the predictable terrorist attack on the Capitol on January 6, 2021, does not justify closing the complex from the public, to whom it belongs. We can and must maintain our commitment to security without sacrificing public access by using the least restrictive means necessary to address security.

The attack on the Capitol was the greatest intelligence and security failure in the history of our nation's capital. There were countless security failures on January 6<sup>th</sup> that we can and must address, including: taking threats of extremist violence seriously at an earlier stage; blocking off the Capitol during high-profile and high-threat events, as is typically done, but was not done on January 6<sup>th</sup>; manpower; and training. Permanent fencing would not address these very real security lapses. Rather, it is another form of security theater—it would make the Capitol "look" safe but mask the lack of state-of-the-art security measures that could actually prevent attacks in the future. Fencing is also incredibly imprecise. It is more likely to keep out children, joggers and tourists than a coordinated attack on the Capitol.

Permanent fencing would send the wrong message to the nation and the world, by transforming our democracy from one that is accessible and of the people to one that is exclusive and fearful of its citizens. It would tell the world that the greatest nation must rely on crude

barriers for safety instead of state-of-the-art intelligence and security protocols. The Capitol has welcomed First Amendment protests and demonstrations for centuries without becoming a fortress. The openness of the Capitol and our democracy is our strength, not a security weakness that needs to be rooted out. Any further consideration of permanent fencing is desperate, distasteful and disrespectful of our history and institutions.

Furthermore, I remind you that the Capitol complex does not exist in a vacuum. It is immediately surrounded by residential neighborhoods and local businesses. Permanent fencing would cause serious damage to the fabric of these communities. These residents and businesses have been more than understanding as their neighborhoods have turned into militarized zones for the sake of safety this past month. They have waited patiently as officers check their identification on their walk home and taken alternative routes when they have found blocked streets. Permanent fencing would infringe on their ability, as well as the general public's ability, to enjoy the public spaces that define our nation's capital.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Eleanor H. Norton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Eleanor Holmes Norton