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NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AG Kaul Speaks Out Against Recent Acts of Discrimination Targeting Members of the Asian-American Community

MADISON, Wis. – Wisconsin Attorney General Josh Kaul is condemning recent xenophobic acts targeting Wisconsinites of Asian descent and encouraging others to do so as well.

"Yesterday, I had the opportunity to talk to community leaders who are working to raise awareness about recent acts of discrimination against members of the Asian-American/Pacific Islander community and who are taking action to fight discrimination," said AG Kaul. "We must stand together and speak out against racism and xenophobia."

Recent news stories have reported instances of discrimination against Wisconsinites of Asian descent during the coronavirus outbreak.

Wisconsin's Hate Crime Provisions

Information regarding hate crimes should be promptly referred to law enforcement. Under Wis. Stat. § 939.645, a hate crime penalty enhancer can apply when certain crimes are committed, at least in part, based on a "belief or perception regarding the race, religion, color, disability, sexual orientation, national origin or ancestry of" the victim.

Wis. Stat. § 939.645(2) provides the following enhancements:

"(a) If the crime committed … is ordinarily a misdemeanor other than a Class A misdemeanor, the revised maximum fine is $10,000 and the revised maximum term of imprisonment is one year in the county jail.

"(b) If the crime committed … is ordinarily a Class A misdemeanor, the penalty increase under this section changes the status of the crime to a felony and the revised maximum fine is $10,000 and the revised maximum term of imprisonment is 2 years.

"(c) If the crime committed … is a felony, the maximum fine prescribed by law for the crime may be increased by not more than $5,000 and the maximum term of imprisonment prescribed by law for the crime may be increased by not more than 5 years."