

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 9, 2017

John F. Kelly
Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Kelly:

As you develop President Trump's budget, we would like to request that you increase the amount of money programmed to address the wave of threats to Jewish Community Centers (JCCs) and cultural and religious institutions across the country. Synagogues, mosques and cultural centers are confronted with increasing levels of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, bigotry, and hate and it is therefore imperative that the amount of funding for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) for Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18) be fully funded at \$50 million to meet these increased threats.

The NSGP provides funding support for target hardening and other physical security enhancements to nonprofit organizations that are at high risk of a terrorist attack. These costs support efforts to build and sustain core capabilities across the Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery mission areas all of which are key to achieve the National Preparedness Goal.

At a time when children are being evacuated from daycare centers in response to repeated bomb threats and Mosques are deliberately being set on fire, we must ensure that all organizations that face these threats have the support they need. It is simply unacceptable to not act. Since the beginning of 2017 there have been over 100 threats made against Jewish centers and schools. The recent increase in religiously motivated threats and attacks have shown the importance of providing institutions with the tools to meet these threats.

Recent threats or assaults across the United States

- **Kent, Washington, March 3, 2017** (Seattle Times): An unknown masked gunman approached a Sikh resident of Kent, WA in his driveway, apparently said, "Go back to your own country," then shot and wounded him. A search for the shooter is still underway, and the FBI is investigating the incident as a hate crime.
- **Cherry Hill, New Jersey, February 27, 2017** (NJ.com): The Katz Jewish Center received a threat via a phone call and as many as 500 people inside the center were evacuated. The Camden County Bomb Squad swept the facility and found no explosive devices. The FBI and Department of Justice are investigating this incident, and others, for possible civil rights violations.
- **Communities Across Pennsylvania, February 26 and 27, 2017** (Philadelphia Inquirer): Following the desecration and vandalism of a Jewish cemetery in Philadelphia, Jewish community centers and day schools in towns across Pennsylvania were evacuated on February 27 following bomb threats.
- **Tampa, Florida, February 24, 2017** (CNN): The local fire department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) are jointly investigating an arson committed against

the Islamic Society of New Tampa. While the investigation is ongoing, Tampa officials and local advocates drew comparisons to the string of bomb threats against Jewish institutions and expressed fear that this incident was hate-related.

- **University City, Missouri, February 21, 2017** (UPI/Fox2 News St. Louis): Investigators with the University City Police Department are investigating the desecration of more than 100 headstones in an organized act of vandalism at a historic Jewish cemetery in University City, Missouri.
- **Dearborn, Michigan, February 19, 2017** (Detroit Free Press): Dearborn police are investigating a call to the American Moslem Society mosque threatening Muslims and their children. The unidentified caller disparaged members' faith and said they should be "eradicated."
- **Eugene, Oregon, February 16, 2017** (The Register-Guard): Eugene police are investigating two more incidents of anti-Semitic vandalism downtown, less than two weeks after the Whiteaker neighborhood was the target of Nazi-related graffiti. A passerby reported to police finding a swastika painted on the glass of an elevator in a downtown parking garage. A second caller reported that a man riding a bike stopped to hang an Aryan Brotherhood flier on a Lane Events Center sign. The sign is near a house that displays a Jewish symbol.
- **Chicago, Illinois, February 4, 2017** (Chicago Tribune): A man was charged with a felony hate crime after smashing a window and placing two swastikas on the door of the Chicago Loop Synagogue. This act of vandalism came amid bomb threats to Jewish Community Centers in Lake Zurich, Illinois, and Chicago's Hyde Park neighborhood.
- **New York, New York, February 3, 2017** (JTA/NY Daily News): A Jewish woman was verbally abused and shoved aboard a New York City subway by a man who recited from an anti-Semitic pamphlet. The suspect shoved the woman, an unnamed 25-year-old, after shouting at her "Dirty Jew" and "Hail the Hitler Youth!"
- **Newton, Massachusetts, January 18, 2017** (Boston Globe): A threatening call was made to the Leventhal-Sidman Jewish Community Center in Newton, resulting in the building's evacuation. After a police investigation, the building re-opened one hour later. The threatening call was similar to calls received by dozens of other JCCs throughout the country.
- **Beanblossom, Indiana, December 18, 2016** (CNN): Vandals had painted "Heil Trump," an anti-gay slur and a swastika on the side of a church, Saint David's Episcopal in Beanblossom, Indiana.

These are just a fraction of the threats and assaults that are occurring across the United States. It is unacceptable that in a country founded on principles of religious freedom that these heinous acts are occurring. We respectfully urge you to secure \$50 million for NSGP in the President's FY18 budget in order to show solidarity and to help protect those affected by these egregious threats and attacks.

Sincerely,



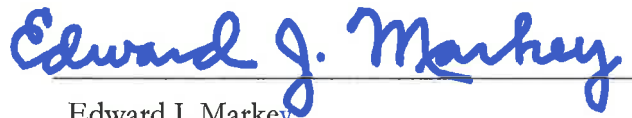
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Roy Blunt
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Al Franken
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



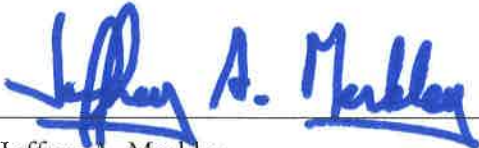
Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Bill Nelson
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



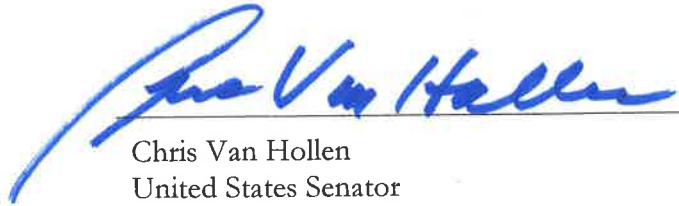
Tammy Baldwin
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Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
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