

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3205

October 30, 2018

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives

Dear Chairmen Shelby and Frelinghuysen and Ranking Members Leahy and Lowey,

I write in regard to the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP), an important homeland security initiative that helps make our nation more secure and resilient by providing at-risk religious and nonprofit organizations with funding support for target hardening and other physical enhancements. On October 27, 2018, a gunman opened fire in a Pittsburgh synagogue, at least the third mass shooting event in a house of worship in three years and an event the Anti-Defamation League described as, "the deadliest attack on the Jewish community in the history of the United States." Considering the increase in violent attacks and perceived credible threats against religious and cultural communities, it is unacceptable that the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations has only approved \$35 million for NSGP funding in the Fiscal Year 2019 (FY19) Appropriations bill. Therefore, as you finalize the FY19 Homeland Security Appropriations bill, I request full funding for the NSGP at \$60 million, the amount approved by the U.S. House Committee on Appropriations for FY19 and the amount appropriated in Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18).

Administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) promotes emergency preparedness coordination between public and private community partners and enhances physical security capabilities so that at-risk nonprofits are able to harden, plan, and ready themselves against a terrorist attack. The NSGP helps keep the public safe by supporting the DHS National Preparedness Goal efforts to build and sustain core capabilities across the Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery mission areas.

Americans continue to suffer through the harmful and violent consequences of hate, and nonprofit religious organizations such as churches, temples, mosques, and other religious centers are especially at-risk. According to the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism, hate crimes reported to police in America's ten largest cities in 2017 rose 12.5 percent over the previous year. The increase was the fourth consecutive annual rise in a row and the highest total in over a

decade. Broken down by categories, the most common type of faith-based hate crime in the nation's ten largest cities in 2017 was anti-Semitic. New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Phoenix, San Diego, San Jose and Denver listed anti-Jewish incidents among the five most frequent bias crimes they reported in 2017. In New York City, for example, about 60 percent of hate crimes reported in 2017 targeted religion, and the most frequent targets were Jews. According to the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), anti-Semitic incidents in 2017 were nearly 60% higher than the previous year. Against this backdrop of hate-filled threats and attacks on Americans, DHS has warned the public about increased homeland security threats. DHS's September 2019 National Terrorism Advisory System (NTAS) bulletin claimed that the U.S. is facing "one of the most challenging threat environments since 9/11, as foreign terrorist organizations exploit the Internet to inspire, enable, or direct individuals already here in the Homeland to commit terrorist acts." These terrorist acts include attacks against perceived "soft targets," like religious and cultural community centers, that have limited security measures in place, making them vulnerable to attack.

Americans are coping with too many tragic examples of religious and culturally motivated threats and attacks. Congress must act to protect national security and the principles of religious freedom upon which our country was founded. The modern homeland security environment is evolving quickly, and our response must be swift and proportional. At a time when credible threats against religious and cultural institutions are increasing, so too must the attention and resources we pay to them. Therefore, I respectfully urge you to provide full funding for the NSGP at \$60 million in the final FY19 Homeland Security Appropriations bill. I am appreciative of the funding NSGP has already received, and I look forward to working with you to continue to support this program's important mission. For any questions or concerns about this request, please reach out to Gil Ruiz, of my staff.

Thank you for your consideration of this request,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator