

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3205

December 7, 2020

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Chairwoman
Senate Appropriations
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jon Tester
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairmen Shelby and Capito, Vice Chairman Leahy, and Ranking Member Tester,

Thank you for your continued support for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) under the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) and the State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSGP). As you finalize the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Homeland Security Appropriations bill, we respectfully ask you to fund NSGP at the funding level that reflects increased risks to the nonprofit sector. Presently, the House and Senate drafts are far apart on recommended levels of funding for the program. The House top line is \$360 million and the Senate's \$90 million. During conference, we urge you to ensure the NSGP is appropriately funded to meet the needs of at-risk populations. At a time of heightened threat to nonprofit faith- and community-based organizations, a bolstered NSGP will continue to provide our nonprofit partners with critical resources and tools they need to protect lives and property.

The NSGP provides for grants to nonprofits deemed at risk of terrorist (or violent extremist) attack, to acquire and install physical security enhancements, conduct preparedness planning, training and exercises, and contract security personnel. The program has improved efforts to keep at-risk nonprofit organizations safe by promoting emergency preparedness coordination and collaboration between public and private community representatives as well as state and local government agencies. Today's quickly evolving threat environment provides a compelling public interest in protecting against attacks on the nonprofit sector that would disrupt the vital health, human, social, cultural, religious, and other humanitarian services and practices they provide to communities, and which threaten the lives and well-being of millions of Americans who operate, utilize, live, and work in proximity to them.

At the beginning of this year, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Homeland Security and National Counterterrorism Center jointly assessed that Domestic Violent Extremists and Racially/Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremists (RMVEs) will continue to pose a lethal threat to faith-based communities, particularly the Jewish community, and remain concerned about the difficulty of detecting lone offenders due to the individualized nature of the radicalization process.^[1] During a recent Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs hearing on threats to the Homeland, FBI Director Christopher Wray testified that the number one threat the nation faces from domestic violent extremists stems from RMVEs, who are considered the most lethal of all domestic extremists in the post-911 environment.^[2] To illustrate his point, Director Wray recounted the arrest last November of Richard Holzer on federal domestic terrorism and hate crime charges for attempting to blow up a historic synagogue in Pueblo, Colorado and provoke “a racial holy war.”^[3]

Additionally, according to the latest FBI Hate Crime Statistics 2019 report,^[4] which was released earlier this month, reported hate crimes motivated by religious bias increased by 100 to a total of 1,650 in 2019, of which more than 60 percent were anti-Jewish incidents (a more than 14% increase). Per this reporting, the Jewish community remains the top target of faith-based hate crimes for the 23rd consecutive year.

These assessments underscore the persistent threat of lethal violence and hate crimes against the Jewish community and other faith- and community-based institutions in the United States.

These groups have too frequently been the victim of many different types of violence. At this time of rising concern, FEMA has reported that on average only about one-third of nonprofits seeking critical security investments secure funding, annually.^[5] The requests exceed the available resources every year. Yet, in today’s threat environment, demand for NSGP resources is expected to grow substantially more, further widening the needs gap.

Since its inception, the program has maintained bi-partisan, bicameral support as an efficient and effective means to accomplish a great deal of security enhancement and preparedness through modest grants.^[6] With this support and for the reasons stated above, we respectfully encourage you to bolster the NSGP funding, so our nation can do all that it can to protect at-risk faith- and community- based nonprofits from increasing extremist and hate-motivated threats.

^[1] Joint Intelligence Bulletin, “Continued Interest in Targeting Jewish Communities in the Homeland by Domestic Violent Extremists,” 3 January 2020 (IA-41058-2 0)

^[2] Senate HSGAC Hearing, “World Wide Threats,” 24 September 2020; Link:

<https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Testimony-Wray-2020-09-24.pdf>

^[3] DoJ/US Attorney’s Office, District of Colorado, 4 November 2019; Link: <https://www.justice.gov/usao-co/pr/southern-colorado-man-charged-federal-hate-crime-plotting-blow-synagogue>

^[4] FBI 2019 Hate Crime Statistics, November 16, 2020; Link: <https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2019>

^[5] FEMA NSGP Webinar, “Protecting Your Organization: The Nonprofit Security Grant Program,” 22 January 2020

^[6] House Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response & Communications hearing titled “Securing Our Communities: Federal Support to High-Risk Urban Areas”, 23 April 2018

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Rob Portman
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Jackie Rosen
United States Senator



James Lankford
United States Senator