

January 25, 2022

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Dear Massachusetts Congressional Delegation,

Our Jewish community across our Commonwealth is deeply grateful for the statement of solidarity from our unified congressional delegation following the terrifying hostage crisis at Congregation Beth Israel last Saturday. Your acknowledgment of the toll that rising antisemitism is taking on our safety and well-being was profoundly meaningful, and we thank you for this.

As you know, the Jewish community in this country and around the world watched in horror as the sanctity of our Sabbath was violated by an antisemitic terrorist gunman intruding into the Texas synagogue, where he held the rabbi and three congregants hostage for a harrowing eleven hours. Along with the collective sigh of relief we shared when all four of them were released unharmed, was another common reaction across the Jewish community; that of fear and dread. Though we were shocked by the act of terror, we were not surprised. Every Jew attending synagogue, sending children to Jewish schools, or participating in Jewish institutions, does so with a sense of unease. We are all too aware that despite our small numbers, we are disproportionately vulnerable to acts of violence. Tracking by the [ADL](#) confirms that “crimes targeting the Jewish community consistently constitute over half of all religion-based crimes.”

\*voting member

Unfortunately, the Jewish community in Massachusetts is no stranger to this threat, and we don't need to watch a crisis unfold across the country on CNN to appreciate the threat of antisemitism to this community and our ability to gather. Our own people and institutions have been targeted with increasing intensity in recent years, including arson attacks at centers in Arlington and Needham, an attempt to bomb an assisted-living center in Longmeadow, and this past June, the stabbing of a rabbi outside a childcare facility in Brighton.

Saturday's armed hostage event in Colleyville, Texas, could have ended tragically. It was one of many incidents reported this past year of racially and ethnically motivated violence that continues to target faith- and community-based organizations, including shootings, arsons, bombings, assaults, and property damage. It crystalized how difficult it is for law enforcement to detect and prevent these threats before they occur.

Federally, the Nonprofit Security Grant Program has been an important tool to help secure Jewish and other communities that face regular threats to their safety and well-being. **Following the events in Colleyville, we join with Jewish Federations across the country to call on our members of Congress to double funding for FEMA's Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) to allow Jewish and other institutions targeted by hate, violence, and threats to protect their communities.**

Congress established NSGP to support the physical security and security activities of at-risk faith-based and other nonprofit organizations, who cannot shoulder alone the investments they require to deter, detect and prevent violent extremist attacks from happening in their communities. For this reason, and in recognition of the increased threat environment under which these organizations must navigate, we respectfully encourage you to appropriately fund NSGP in FY 2022. Congress should do all that it can to protect at-risk and vulnerable nonprofits from today's increasing extremist and hate-motivated threats.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We thank you in advance for your efforts to ensure the safety and security of our community.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Marc Baker, President and CEO, Combined Jewish Philanthropies

Amir Cohen, Executive Director, Jewish Federation of Greater New Bedford, Inc.

Nora Gorenstein, Interim Executive Director, Jewish Federation of Western Massachusetts

Dara Kaufman, Executive Director, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

Laurie Tishler Mindlin, Executive Director, Merrimack Valley Jewish Federation

Steven Schimmel, Executive Director, Jewish Federation of Massachusetts

Jeremy Burton, Executive Director, Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston