

June 1, 2021

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
Chair
The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair
The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Christopher S. Murphy
Chair
The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard
Chair
The Honorable Chuck Fleischmann
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Leahy, Ranking Member Shelby, Chairwoman DeLauro, Ranking Member Granger, Chairman Murphy, Ranking Member Capito, Chairwoman Roybal-Allard, and Ranking Member Fleischmann,

As organizations representing Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Catholic, Episcopal, Evangelical, Lutheran, Protestant, Seventh-day Adventist, and other Christian and communities of faith across the United States, we believe that all people ought to be free from fear when gathering for religious worship and service. For this reason, we write to urge you to increase appropriations for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) in fiscal year 2022.

NSGP provides funding for at-risk nonprofits from urban settings to suburban neighborhoods and rural communities, including houses of worship, religious schools, community centers, and other charities, to improve security measures to their buildings. There is a critical need and urgency for these grants. Our sacred spaces have been desecrated, and our faithful murdered. The most recent available statistics from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, for 2019, show that at least 1,650 hate crimes were committed against members of the faiths we represent. This is up from the 1,550 incidents reported in 2018. In recent congressional testimony, FBI Director Christopher Wray warned that the greatest threats to the homeland are posed by domestic violent extremists who attack soft targets, such as places of worship, and who are difficult to detect and disrupt before they act. During a March 2, 2021 hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Director Wray testified that domestic terrorism "has been metastasizing around the country for a long time now, and it's not going away anytime soon ... this is a top concern."

This year, FY 2021, Congress made available \$180 million to the program, allowing many faith- and community-based institutions to apply for necessary security improvements, including preparedness planning and trainings and the acquisition of critical physical security

enhancements. FEMA estimates that they will consider more than 3,300 applications submitted by the states this grant cycle, a demand far exceeding available resources. Many applications are expected to be turned away.

Each of our communities believes that respect for human dignity requires respect for religious liberty. We believe that protecting the ability of all Americans to live out their faith without fear or harm is one of the most important duties of the federal government. We are grateful to Congress for establishing the NSGP program to better integrate nonprofit preparedness investments and activities within the broader whole community response to violent extremism, and for steadily increasing program funding in recognition of the severity of the threats. These security grants benefit people of all faiths. At a time of increasing extremism and antagonism towards different religious groups and religion in general, we encourage Congress to increase the total NSGP funding to \$360 million in FY 2022.

Sincerely,

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee for Religious Liberty

The Jewish Federations of North America

Agudath Israel of America

The Episcopal Church

Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty

National African American Clergy Network

North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventists

National Association of Evangelicals

Sikh Council for Interfaith Relations

Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America

U.S. Council of Muslim Organizations