

October 5, 2020

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Chair  
The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Vice Chair  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito  
Chair  
The Honorable Jon Tester  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Homeland Security  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

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

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 Shelby, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairwoman Capito, Ranking Member Tester, Chairwoman Lowey, Ranking Member Granger, Chairwoman Roybal-Allard, and Ranking Member Fleischmann,

As organizations representing Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Catholic, Baptist, 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).

NSGP provides funding for at-risk nonprofits from urban settings, to suburban neighborhoods, to rural communities, including houses of worship, religious schools, community centers, and other charities, to improve security measures to their buildings. There is certainly a need 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 2018, show that at least 1,244 hate crimes were committed against members of the faiths we represent. 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.

This year, the program made \$90 million available to nonprofits, allowing many faith- and community-based institutions to make necessary security improvements, including trainings and critical physical security enhancements. Even so, the majority of applicants for the funding were turned away. Therefore, we encourage Congress to increase the total funding to \$360 million -

\$180 million for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program under the Urban Area Security Initiative (NSGP-UASI), and \$180 million for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program under the State Homeland Security Grant Program (NSGP-State).

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. 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 believe significant increased funding for this important government program in fiscal year 2021 is imperative.

Sincerely,

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee for Religious Liberty  
Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America  
National Association of Evangelicals  
U.S. Council of Muslim Organizations  
Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty  
The Jewish Federations of North America  
National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA  
North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventists  
Sikh Council for Interfaith Relations  
Agudath Israel of America  
The Episcopal Church