



## ***Committee for Religious Liberty***

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### **Nonprofit Security Grant Program**

In its 1965 Declaration on Religious Liberty, [\*Dignitatis humanae\*](#), the Catholic Church teaches: “The protection and promotion of the inviolable rights of man ranks among the essential duties of government. Therefore government is to assume the safeguard of the religious freedom of all its citizens, in an effective manner, by just laws and by other appropriate means.”

Houses of worship provide spaces for people to come together with fellow believers and pray. As hosts to recovery groups, food pantries, and community outreach activities, they often serve as anchor institutions for their neighborhoods. Recent years have seen a disturbing rise in attacks on these places. These are attacks on religious freedom. Gunmen in churches, synagogues, and mosques terrorize faith communities. Churches and statues have been desecrated. Mosques and synagogues have been vandalized. A free society cannot tolerate these attacks.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has administered the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) since its creation by Congress in 2005. This program provides grants to nonprofits and houses of worship in order to enhance security through improvements to infrastructure, funding for emergency planning and training, upgrading security systems, and some renovation projects. The program initially received \$25 million in funding, and Congress provided \$90 million for the program in FY 2020.

Catholic dioceses, schools, and charities have received NSGP funding. For example, the Secure Our School Project at St. John’s Regional Catholic School in Maryland was able to make several improvements to deter a potential threat or act of terrorism and protect its students, faculty, and visitors against such risks. The grants were planned out using the National Preparedness Goal set by FEMA, and they helped to fund exterior lighting, 3M window film, a security fence around the playground, an upgraded monitoring system, and more.

While the program has been a success, FEMA has reported major gaps between the high demand for the program each grant cycle and the level of funding Congress has appropriated to support it. Only one-third of applications considered have been funded through fiscal year 2019 (most recent data reported). For this reason, in 2020, the USCCB joined others in encouraging Congress to quadruple the total funding to \$360 million. The FY 2021 House Department of Homeland Security Appropriations draft bill provided the requested \$360 million for this program. However, Congress must act to ensure the increase is included in any year-end appropriations agreement.

These security grants benefit people of all faiths. At a time of increasing extremism and antagonism towards different religious groups and religion in general, adequate funding for these important government programs is necessary. Protecting the ability of all Americans to live out their faith is one of the most important duties of the federal government.