

October 5, 2020

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

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

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

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

Dear Chairwoman Capito, Ranking Member Tester, 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
North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventists
Sikh Council for Interfaith Relations
Agudath Israel of America
The Episcopal Church