

June 9, 2022

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
Chair

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
Ranking Member

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member

Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Christopher S. Murphy
Chair

The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard
Chair

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member

The Honorable Chuck Fleischmann
Ranking Member

Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

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,

We appreciate your historic appropriation of \$250 million in Fiscal Year 2022 for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP). As organizations representing diverse 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 and participating in communal events. As you work on funding for Fiscal Year 2023, we write to ask for your support of continued, robust investments in NSGP, specifically by providing at least \$180 million under the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) Nonprofit Security Grant Program and at least \$180 million for the State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSGP).

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. There is a critical need and urgency for these grants. This year began with what the FBI called a "terrorism-related" attack on Congregation Beth Israel synagogue in Colleyville, Texas. Thanks to the synagogue's partnership with law enforcement and prior training of the type supported by NSGP, the armed hostage event did not end tragically.

Yet the attack underscored the rising threats faced by faith and minority communities, as racially, religiously, and ethnically motivated violence has targeted mosques and Islamic centers, historically black colleges and universities, Jewish synagogues and community centers, churches of varied denominations, and other faith-and community-based organizations. According to a recent National Terrorism Advisory System Bulletin on Heightened Threats to Faith-based Institutions bulletin, the United States remains in a heightened threat environment, with increased volatility, unpredictability, and complexity of the threat environment, with faith-based communities at a particularly high risk.ⁱⁱ The attack at a Southern California Taiwanese Presbyterian church and the attack on a grocery store in Buffalo, NY, while not involving a non-profit organization, highlight the continuing threat to our communities from targeted attacks motivated by hateful ideologies.

The Nonprofit Security Grant Program is perhaps our greatest vehicle for deterring these threats. NSGP supports critical security investments, such as improvements to physical security, emergency preparedness planning, training and exercises, and closer engagement and collaboration between public and private community representatives as well as their state and local homeland security and emergency management government agencies. In the past, we had seen a gunman deterred from entering a predominantly African American church in Jeffersontown, Kentucky due to upgrades the institution made to its security system. The NSGP provides religious institutions with the ability to make such enhancements to their security.

Because the faith-based community and nonprofit institutions often lack the needed resources required to deter, detect, and prevent violent extremist attacks alone, DHS has strongly advised government investments to fill the gap.ⁱⁱⁱ Congress established NSGP to make these investments, which are even more critical given today's threat environment. Our collective ability to deter these attacks is not only important for the directly impacted communities, but it also helps alleviate the ultimate collective economic and emotional cost to all Americans, underscoring the value of effective NSGP investments.

The increase in appropriations is warranted to meet the demand as DHS reports that the NSGP is consistently oversubscribed. Just as in FY 2021, as much as \$220 million of requests were turned away, and many applications are expected to be turned away again in the FY22 cycle due to a lack of funding. We believe that is why, for the first time, the President's Budget increased the funding request for this program to a full \$360 million, and the House passed a bipartisan bill that would authorize up to \$500 million for this critical program.

We are grateful to Congress for establishing NSGP to better integrate nonprofit preparedness investments and activities within the broader 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, we encourage Congress to increase the total NSGP funding to \$360 million for FY 2023.

Sincerely,

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

ⁱ Jewish Federations of North America, “Annual Threat Chronology,” January 3, 2022 (Updated March 20, 2022).

ⁱⁱ DHS National Terrorism Advisory System (NTAS) Bulletin, Feb. 07, 2022; Link:

<https://www.dhs.gov/ntas/advisory/national-terrorism-advisory-system-bulletin-february-07-2022>

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https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Mitigating%20Attacks%20on%20Houses%20of%20Worship%20Security%20Guide_508.pdf