

January 27, 2022

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The Honorable Charlie Baker, Governor  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
State House, Room 280  
Boston MA, 02133

Dear Governor Baker,

We are reaching out to you as a friend and staunch supporter of the Commonwealth's Jewish community, who has stood with us time and time again in times of crisis, and who has prioritized our safety, and the security of our institutions. We are profoundly grateful for all that you have done, including ensuring vital resources through the NonProfit Security Grant program (line item 8000-1127).

We are reaching out now since tragically, recent events confirm that our needs greatly exceed the resources dedicated to ensuring our safety.

As you know, the Jewish community in this country and around the world watched in horror earlier this month as the sanctity of our Sabbath was violated by an antisemitic terrorist gunman intruding into a Texas synagogue, where he held the rabbi and three congregants hostage for a harrowing eleven hours. Along with the collective sigh of relief we shared when all four of them were released unharmed, was another common reaction across the Jewish community; that of fear and dread. Though we were shocked by the act of terror, we were not surprised. Every Jew attending synagogue, sending children to Jewish schools, or participating in Jewish institutions, does so with a sense of unease. We are all too aware that despite our small numbers, we are disproportionately vulnerable to acts of violence. Tracking by the [ADL](#) confirms that "crimes targeting the Jewish community consistently constitute over half of all religion-based crimes."

Unfortunately, the Jewish community in Massachusetts is no stranger to this threat, and we don't need to watch a crisis unfold across the country on CNN to appreciate the threat of antisemitism to this community and our ability to gather. Our own people and institutions have been targeted with increasing intensity in recent years, including arson attacks at centers in Arlington and Needham, an attempt to bomb an assisted-living center in Longmeadow, and this past June, the stabbing of a rabbi outside a childcare facility in Brighton.

Saturday's armed hostage event in Colleyville, Texas, could have ended tragically. It was one of many incidents reported this past year of racially and ethnically motivated violence that continue to target faith- and community-based organizations, including shootings, arsons, bombings, assaults, and property damage. It crystalized how difficult it is for law enforcement to detect and prevent these threats before they occur.

The Jewish institutions that received funding from the Commonwealth through the Nonprofit Security Grant Program to address the security needs they determined for their institutions, were thankfully able to put measures in place to ensure the safety of their members. But the reality is that when that funding was awarded, the demand far exceeded the availability of funds, and vulnerable institutions were left without adequate resources to address their own security needs.

Given the continuing, and in all probability, increasing need, we respectfully request that the funding for this critical program be doubled, from \$1.5M to \$3M to protect at-risk and vulnerable nonprofits

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from today's increasing extremist and hate-motivated threats. Furthermore, we respectfully request that this funding be awarded as soon as possible, to enable institutions across the Commonwealth to put adequate safety measures in place expediently.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We thank you in advance for your efforts to ensure the safety and security of our community.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Marc Baker, President and CEO, Combined Jewish Philanthropies

Amir Cohen, Executive Director, Jewish Federation of Greater New Bedford, Inc.

Nora Gorenstein, Interim Executive Director, Jewish Federation of Western Massachusetts

Dara Kaufman, Executive Director, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires

Laurie Tishler Mindlin, Executive Director, Merrimack Valley Jewish Federation

Steven Schimmel, Executive Director, Jewish Federation of Massachusetts

Jeremy Burton, Executive Director, Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston