May 20, 2019

His Excellency Governor Charlie Baker
Massachusetts State House
Office of the Governor
24 Beacon Street, Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Baker:

While celebrating the end of Passover, the celebration of the Jewish people’s liberation, we were confronted yet again with the horror of another murderous attack on a Jewish synagogue in Poway, California, six months to the day of the massacre at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh. The sanctity of our houses of worship has been pierced by the horror of antisemitism and our sense of security is in peril.

While we are grateful to our partners in government for denouncing violence, hatred, and antisemitism and offering comfort and offering healing in our time of need, our communities require more. Across the country, threats and acts of violence have escalated against synagogues, black churches, mosques, cultural centers and other religious institutions. Seemingly every week, we join with clergy and leaders from every walk of life, decrying the bloodshed and pleading for sanity, and a restoration to calm. But antisemitism is on the rise, even here. A recent ADL audit found that “people across Massachusetts continue to experience antisemitism at historically high rates” as we record the fourth highest number of incidents (following California, New York and New Jersey), highlighting the awareness that this tide of hatred toward Jews isn’t dissipating anytime soon.

Several states reacted swiftly, by partnering with at-risk institutions to develop security enhancements and protocols, including: The State of New York offered $10 million in grants to vulnerable non-public schools and cultural centers, including religious-based institutions; New Jersey released $11.3 million in funds; Maryland released $5 million; and recently the Governor of California announced $15 million in grants. Massachusetts, however only has a pilot program of $150,000, with no funds yet allocated for the next year. We need to do better.

We respectfully ask our leadership in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to step-up and fulfill its basic obligation by fully funding the non-profit security grant program to provide these critical resources to ensure that our communities and our congregations are safe and secure. As faith communities meet our responsibility to welcome and embrace all who enter our doors, we need our government to realize its responsibility to offer the protection to make “freedom of religion” a reality in the Commonwealth. Massachusetts basks in its well-deserved reputation as a shining beacon, a model across the nation of freedom, equality and justice. In this moment of crisis for our community, we are called once again to lead and not follow.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Burton, Executive Director, Jewish Community Relations Council, Boston
Rabbi Marc Baker, President & CEO, Combined Jewish Philanthropies, Boston
Dara Kaufman, Executive Director, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, Pittsfield
Judy Usow, President & Board Chair, Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, Pittsfield
Steven Schimmel, Executive Director, Jewish Federation of Central MA, Worcester
Amir Cohen, Executive Director, Jewish Federation of Greater New Bedford, New Bedford
Laurie Tishler Mindlin, Executive Director, Merrimack Valley Jewish Federation, Andover
Stewart Bromberg, CEO, Jewish Federation of Western Massachusetts, Springfield
Joshua Vogel, Communications Director, Jewish Federation of Western Massachusetts, Springfield
Mark Sokoll, President & CEO, Jewish Community Center of Greater Boston, Newton
Kait Rogers, Chief Finance and Admin. Officer, Jewish Community Center of Greater Boston, Newton
Marty Schneer, Executive Director, Jewish Community Center of the North Shore, Marblehead
Michael Paysnick, Executive Director, Springfield Jewish Community Center, Springfield
Rabbi Alison Adler, Temple B'nai Abraham, Beverly
Rabbi Allison Berry, Temple Shalom, Newton
Rabbi Laura Abrasley, Temple Shalom, Newton
Rabbi Eric Garvis, Temple Shalom, Newton
Rabbi Shoshana Friedman, Temple Sinai, Brookline
Rabbi Andrew Vogel, Temple Sinai, Brookline
Nora Abrahamer, President, Temple Sinai,
Rabbi Audrey Marcus Berkman, Temple Ohabei Shalom, Brookline
Shari Churwin, Education Director, Temple Ohabei Shalom, Brookline
Rabbi Barbara Penzner, Temple Hillel B’nai Torah, West Roxbury
Rabbi Benjamin Samuels, Congregation Shaarei Tefillah, Newton
Rabbi Ronne Friedman, Rabbi Emeritus, Temple Israel, Boston
Rabbi Elaine Zecher, Senior Rabbi, Temple Israel, Boston
Rabbi Bernard H. Mehlman, Senior Scholar, Temple Israel, Boston
Rabbi Matthew Soffer, Senior Associate Rabbi, Temple Israel Boston
Rabbi Jenn Gubitz, Temple Israel, Boston
Rabbi Suzie Jacobson, Temple Israel, Boston
Cantor Roy Einhorn, Temple Israel, Boston
Dan Deutsch, Executive Director, Temple Israel, Boston
Gary Pforzheimer, President, Temple Israel, Boston
Marc Maxwell, Vice President, Temple Israel, Boston
Alane Shanks, Treasurer, Temple Israel, Boston
Rabbi Cari Bricklin- Small, Temple Shir Tikvah, Winchester
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Rabbi Jordana Schuster Battis, Temple Shir Tikva, Wayland
Scott A. Cohen, President, Temple Shir Tikva, Wayland
Susan Altman, Executive Director, Temple Shir Tikva, Wayland
Rabbi Daniel Liben, Temple Israel of Natick, Natick
Rabbi Darby J. Leigh, Kerem Shalom, Swampscott
Rabbi Howard A. Cohen, Congregation Shiray Hayam, Swampscott
Rabbi Howard Jaffe, Senior Rabbi, Temple Isaiah of Lexington, Lexington
Barry Tuber, President, Temple Isaiah of Lexington, Lexington
Steven Jaworski, Facilities Manager, Temple Isaiah of Lexington, Lexington
Rabbi Jay Pearlman, Temple Beth Shalom, Needham
Rabbi Todd A. Markley, Temple Beth Shalom, Needham
Rabbi Joseph B. Mezler, Temple Sinai, Sharon
Rabbi Joshua Breindel, Congregation Beth El of the Sudbury River Valley, Sudbury
Rabbi Keith Stern, Temple Beth Avodah, Newton
Elyse Hyman, Executive Director, Temple Beth Avodah, Newton
Rabbi Kenneth Carr, Temple Chayai Shalom, Easton
Rabbi Liz P.G. Hirsch, Temple Anshe Anumim, Pittsfield
Rabbi Louis Polisson, Congregation Or Atid, Wayland
Laura Blumberg, President, Congregation Or Atid, Wayland
Rabbi Mayshie Schwartz, Director, The Chai Center and YJP, Brookline
Rabbi Mendy Kivman, Chabad of Greater Milford, Milford
Rabbi Micah Citrin, Temple Beth David, Westwood
Rabbi Ron Fish, Senior Rabbi, Temple Israel, Sharon
Rabbi Rachel Silverman, Temple Israel, Sharon
Joshua Blumenthal, Executive Director, Temple Israel, Sharon
Marion Gribetz, President, Temple Israel, Sharon
Rabbi Mordechai Rackover, Principal, Temple Israel of Sharon Religious School, Sharon
Rabbi Moshe Bleich, Director, Wellesley-Weston Chabad, Wellesley
Rabbi Nechemia Schusterman, Chabad of Peabody, Peabody
Rabbi Raphael Kanter, Tifereth Israel Congregation, New Bedford
Rabbi Richard E. Perlman, Senior Rabbi, Temple Ner Tamid, Peabody
Rabbi Sharon L. Sobel Temple Beth Am, Framingham
Rabbi Susan Abramson, Temple Shalom Emeth, Burlington
Rabbi Thomas M. Alpert, Temple Etz Chaim, Franklin
Richard Shulman, President, Temple Etz Chaim, Franklin
Rabbi Toba Spitzer, Congregation Dorshei Tzedek, West Newton, President of the MA Board of Rabbis
Rabbi Victor Reinstein, Nehar Shalom Community Synagogue, Jamaica Plain
Rabbi William Hamilton, Congregation Kehillath Israel, Brookline
David E. Williams, President, Congregation Kehillath Israel, Brookline
Jonathan E. Slutzman, Vice President, Congregation Kehillath Israel, Brookline
Paula Silver, Director of Administration, Congregation Kehillath Israel, Brookline
Rabbi Yehoshua Zehavi, Congregation Agudat Achim, Leominster
Scott Zibel, President, Congregation Agudat Achim, Leominster
David Suessman, Security Committee Chair, Congregation Agudat Achim, Leominster
Rabbi Yisroel Freeman, Chabad Center of Sudbury, Sudbury
Kandy O'Brien, President Temple Kol Tikvah, Sharon
Kandy Kafka, Temple Kol Tikvah Sharon
Sanford Keliher, Vice President, Temple B'nai Abraham, Beverly
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David Belsky, Safety & Security Chair, Temple Emanu-El, Haverhill
Scott Hannula, Assistant Secretary, Temple Emanu-El, Haverhill
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Bob Schecter, President of the Board of Trustees, Temple Beth Elohim, Wellesley
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Caryl Goodman, Tri-President, Congregation Mishkan Tefilah, Brookline
Steven Katz, Tri-President, Congregation Mishkan Tefilah, Brookline
Susan Schreiner Weingarten, Chairperson, The Boston Synagogue, Boston
Cynthia Levitt, Executive Director, Temple Emeth, Chestnut Hill
Michael Clayton, President, Temple Emeth, Chestnut Hill
David Jacobson, President, Adams Street Synagogue, Newton
David Leers, President, Temple Beth Elohim, Acton
Ellen Rappaport Tanowitz, President, Temple Reyim, Newton
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Liz Goldstein, Executive Vice President, Temple Emanuel, Newton
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Kenneth Lifton, Security Chair, Temple Shalom Emeth, Burlington
Kenneth Milgram, Director of Security, Young Israel Congregation, Sharon
Marilyn Okonow, President, The Vilna Shul, Boston
Mark Fydenberg, President, Temple Beth Israel, Waltham
Marilyn Racette, Security Committee Chair, Temple Beth Israel, Waltham
Maureen Chapman, Executive Director, Temple Emanuel of Andover, Andover
Nancy J. LaFleur, Executive Director, Temple Emanu-El, Haverhill
Paul Cooperstein, President, Congregation Beth Shalom of the Blue Hills, Milton
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Rabbi Uri Feldman, Dean, Yeshiva Ohr Yisrael Highschool for Boys, Chestnut Hill
Julie Galler, Executive Director, Striar Hebrew Academy, Sharon
Susan Tanchel, Head of School, JCDS Boston’s Jewish Community Day School, Watertown
Elizabeth Waksman, Board President, JCDS Boston’s Jewish Community Day School, Watertown
Amy Gold, Head of School, Epstein Hillel School, Marblehead
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Ellen Chajes, Executive Director, Bais Yaakov School, Boston
Rabbi Neal Gold, Jewish Chaplain, Babson College, Boston
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Rabbi Sharon Cohen Anisfeld, President, Hebrew College, Newton
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Jonathan Cohen, President, Eli and Bessie Cohen Camps, Wellesley
Arlene Remz, Executive Director, Gateways: Access to Jewish Education, Newton
Louis J. Woolf, President & CEO, Hebrew SeniorLife, Boston
Samuel I. Mendales, Executive Director, Hillel Council of New England, Newton Centre
Lital Carmel, Regional Director, Israeli-American Council, Newton
Kimberlee Schumacher, President & CEO, Jewish Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Boston, Newton
Carl Zack, Interim CEO, Jewish Family & Children Services, Waltham
Jamie Grossman, Board President, Jewish Family & Children Services, Waltham
Dale Okonow, Board Member, Jewish Family & Children Services, Waltham
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Rabbi David Jaffe, The Kirva Institute, Sharon

cc:  Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito
     Senate President Karen Spilka
     Speaker of the House Robert DeLeo
     Secretary Michael J. Hefferman, Executive Office of Administration & Finance
     Secretary Daniel Bennett, Executive Office of Public Safety & Security
     Senator Michael Rodrigues, Chair, Senate Committee on Ways and Means
     Representative Aaron Michlewitz, Chair, House Committee on Ways and Means.