

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 16, 2017

The Honorable John Boozman  
Chairman  
Homeland Security Subcommittee  
on Appropriations  
131 Dirksen  
United States Senate

The Honorable Jon Tester  
Ranking Member  
Homeland Security Subcommittee  
on Appropriations  
128 Dirksen  
United States Senate

Dear Chairman Boozman and Ranking Member Tester:

As you work with your House counterparts to finalize the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, we are writing to respectfully request that you fund the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) at \$35 million and include bill language that directs \$10 million of that amount to smaller at-risk communities, regardless of their designation under the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI). Given the unprecedented and gravely concerning increase of bias-motivated violence and threats to synagogues, mosques, churches, and cultural centers across the country, including more than 140 bomb threats against Jewish Community Centers and day schools in 2017 alone, we strongly believe that additional funding is required to adequately protect all nonprofit faith-based communities—whether in metropolitan areas or small towns—that continue to be at risk of terrorism.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's NSGP provides funding support for target hardening and other physical security enhancements and activities to nonprofit organizations that are at high risk of a terrorist attack and are located within one of the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI)-designated urban areas. We understand the intent behind this geographic limitation and recognize the need to allocate limited resources based on a rigorous analysis of risk. We also believe that the current NSGP structure is too rigid to account for the dynamic nature of terrorism, leaving unprepared and unprotected countless at-risk nonprofits that are located outside of major urban areas, including those in medium-sized cities like Milwaukee or Little Rock or in rural areas across our states. In fact, there are no UASI-designated areas in Arkansas or Montana, thereby excluding those states' nonprofits from the program, or ten other states represented by Senators on the Homeland Security subcommittee (Alabama, Alaska, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Wisconsin, West Virginia, or Vermont).

The NSGP should be expanded in light of repeated calls by terrorist groups, including ISIL, for their adherents to attack soft targets in large and small communities, including places of worship that have significant symbolic value. Indeed, the Department of Homeland Security has warned that as traditional targets become more hardened, terrorists, especially homegrown extremists, will shift their attention to more vulnerable ones. Furthermore, America's recent experience with terrorism and bias-motivated violence shows that perpetrators do not limit themselves to UASI-designations. For example, Orlando, the location of the 2016 Pulse nightclub shooting, San


Bernardino, the site of a 2015 mass shooting, and Oak Creek, Wisconsin, the location of a 2012 attack on a Sikh temple, are not UASI-designated areas. To ensure adequate preparedness and resilience of all nonprofits, the NSGP must be revised to allow the funding to follow the risk.


Because this needed change would increase the number of eligible grantees, an additional \$15 million above the committee-reported bill for the program total is required to ensure that nonprofits located in existing UASI-designated areas are not negatively impacted. This is particularly critical because historically the program has been underfunded compared to the need. For example, in FY16, 850 nonprofits submitted applications totaling \$59 million, but only 282 grants totaling \$20 million were awarded. Similarly, in FY15, 715 nonprofits submitted applications totaling \$50 million, but only 180 grants totaling \$13 million were awarded.

While we recognize the budget constraints that you face, the extraordinary nature of this crisis demands extraordinary action. The United States was established on the sacred rights of freedom of religion and assembly, but those guarantees ring hollow without the safety—including secure communal spaces—required to exercise those rights. Put simply, America's guiding principles demand that we prioritize the safety of our faith communities.


Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

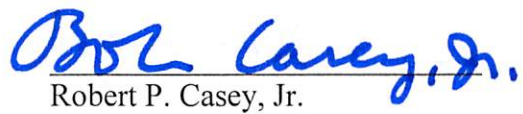
  
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Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator

  
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Jack Reed  
United States Senator

  
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Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

  
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Chris Van Hollen  
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Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator

  
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Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator



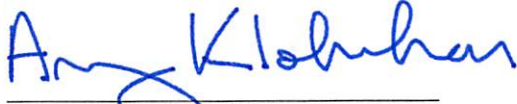
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United States Senator



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Sherrod Brown  
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Amy Klobuchar  
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