

Action Alert: Urge Congress to Increase Security Grant Funding

November 17, 2020



Dear Agudah Activist:

Our community is facing an unprecedented opportunity to take a giant step forward in helping to save lives.

Congress is currently considering legislation that could significantly boost the ongoing effort to improve security for our community institutions – shuls, yeshivas, religious facilities, charitable and social service organizations – within the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP). Under NSGP, nonprofits are provided up to \$100,000 worth of assistance for various types of equipment and for personnel to better secure entities at high risk of terrorist attack. Having experienced increasing threats and incidents of violence as noted in the latest FBI Hate Crimes Statistics Report – including murderous attacks in recent years in Pittsburgh, Poway, Monsey and Jersey City – we all know that the Jewish community has a strong stake in this program and must vigorously support Congress's efforts to strengthen it.

Indeed, according to the FBI Report, in 2019, anti-Semitic hate crimes increased 14 percent and constituted over 60 percent of all religion-based hate crimes, and this is likely an underestimate..

As the violence has increased, Agudah and other groups have been successful over the years in urging Congress to authorize and appropriate more

funding, protecting more institutions, and reaching more cities, for federal security grants. The current allocation is \$90 million.

But we are at a crossroads.

Due to the escalating violence targeting nonprofits, including houses of worship, Congress continues to demonstrate a serious commitment to meet the threat of terror with appropriate funding. The House Appropriations Committee version would quadruple current levels to \$360 million. Under this plan, the appropriation will be split down the middle — \$180 million for predesignated Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) areas, \$180 million for other high-risk areas. On the Senate side, appropriators are maintaining the current \$90 million level. Of this amount, \$50 million will go to predesignated urban areas, while \$40 million will go to non-predesignated urban areas.

As House-Senate negotiations over the bill will move forward, we must convey the strong message to Appropriations Committee negotiators to boost NSGP funding significantly - making the House-approved \$360 million a target goal and approving an amount as close to that as possible in the bill that will eventually emerge. While we appreciate the Senate's sensitivity to the problem and its intention to continue current allocations to address it, we believe that further funding is necessary to keep pace with the growing and worsening threat facing nonprofits and the communities they serve.

We know that our grassroots advocacy can make a difference. Agudath Israel and other organizations, under the coordination of the Jewish Federations of North America, fought hard to create and maintain the NSGP program. National and local involvement, working together, brought the program to where it is today, and we can move it further ahead.

Urge Congress to appropriate a substantial increase over current levels, as reflected in the House approach

Thank you for your help and support!

Rabbi Abba Cohen