



## MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

S. 8599 Sutton / A. 9335 Lasher

DATE: January 7, 2026

Agudath Israel expresses our support for this bill, which establishes a buffer zone in front of houses of worship to ensure safe and unobstructed access at all times. The bill correctly recognizes that people enter these buildings not only for prayer, but also for meetings, programs, and other community gatherings. Regardless of the purpose, individuals going into a house of worship should be able to do so without being blocked or intimidated at the entrance.

This protection is especially important given the rise in antisemitic incidents in New York State. Synagogues have increasingly become points where protesters gather, creating tense and unsafe situations for anyone simply trying to enter the building. Ensuring a clear buffer zone helps prevent harassment and intimidation and provides a basic measure of safety for people walking into these institutions, even for mundane or non-religious reasons.

This issue became especially clear on November 19, 2025, when demonstrators stood directly outside the entrance of the Park East Synagogue during an event held inside. People attending the event were blocked and harassed as they tried to enter, showing exactly why this legislation is needed.

The enactment of this legislation would ensure that individuals can safely and freely enter a house of worship for any purpose, without facing intimidation, or harassment. It establishes essential safeguards that will significantly enhance the safety and dignity of all New Yorkers.

While the proposed 25-foot buffer zone represents a meaningful step forward in safeguarding access to houses of worship, it should be understood as an important foundation upon which stronger protections can be built.

We therefore urge the passage of this legislation and encourage continued efforts to further enhance these safeguards in the future.