HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

We urge Congress to increase funding for the Holocaust Survivor Assistance Program to $5 million in FY 2017.

Background: In FY 2015, Congress responded to a 2011 proposal made by the Jewish Federations of North America and established the Holocaust Survivor Assistance Program. Housed in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Administration for Community Living (ACL), this program advances Holocaust survivor care through innovation, capacity building, and the dissemination of best practice models throughout the Aging Services Network. The grant program, which has always had bipartisan support, is administered in partnership by the ACL and JFNA’s Center for Advancing Holocaust Survivor Care.

The program emphasizes “person-centered, trauma-informed supportive services (PCTI)” as traumatic experiences (particularly early life trauma, such as malnutrition/starvation or the death of loved ones, as was experienced by survivors under the Nazi regime) have a direct impact on people’s behavioral and physical health, and can lead to social problems and early death. The program paves the way for the application of PCTI supportive services for survivors and other aging victims of trauma, such as refugee populations and victims of natural disasters.

The Holocaust Survivor Assistance Program was designed as a 5-year program, funded at $5 million, annually, with a local non-federal match equal to 40 percent of total project costs. In fiscal years 2015 and 2016, Congress appropriated $2.5 million, or half the annual amount intended. The unmet demand for survivor assistance services provides strong justification for Congress to fully fund the program a $5 million annually.

National Justification: According to the Department of Health and Human Services, there are approximately 130,000 Holocaust survivors living in the United States – with an estimated 30,000 living in poverty. Survivors are an average age of 84 years old. As a group, they are at increased risk of depression and social isolation. The ability to age in place is paramount because of the potential for re-traumatization from triggers commonly associated with institutionalization, such as loss of autonomy and control over daily decisions related to meals or freedom of movement, or potentially traumatic experiences with unfamiliar showers or uniforms. Access to home- and community-based services, such as those funded by ACL, and a plan to age-in-place that take into account the adversity and trauma survivors have experienced are essential to the quality and impact of care survivors receive in the remaining years of their lives.
**Local Justification:** Based on research conducted by the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago (JFMC), the metropolitan Chicago area is home to more than 6,000 Holocaust survivors, many of whom are poor and in poor health. One in three survivor households reports living at or just above the federal poverty level, compared with 13 percent of other households with older adults. Seventy-four percent report their health to be poor-to-fair, compared with only 31 percent of non-survivor older adults. Survivor households are also more than twice as likely to report that they or someone in their household needs assistance with daily living tasks as compared to non-survivor households.

Presently, local Holocaust services provided within the Jewish community supports nearly 900 survivors, and the demand is growing. With caseloads of up to 150 clients per staff member, there are close to 300 local survivors on waitlists for services. Moreover, Chicago’s survivor population is primarily from the former Soviet Union, who tend to be younger, poorer, and in worse health than other survivor populations. For these reasons, the Holocaust Survivor Assistance Program is of particular importance to the Chicago Jewish community, as demand necessitates the need for improved and expanded survivor assistance services.

**Legislative Ask:** We urge Congress to increase funding for the Holocaust Survivor Assistance Program appropriation to $5 million in FY 2017, to ensure adequate resources to improve and expand services for Holocaust survivors, a vulnerable population that relies on this critical safety net program.

For further information, please contact Lisa Shuger Hublitz, Washington DC Office Director, Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, at 202-466-7090.

Established in 1900, the Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago (JUF/JF) supports a network of more than 120 health and social service agencies, serving more than 300,000 Chicagoans of all faiths, and hundreds of thousands of Jews throughout the world. The Jewish Federations of North America represents 151 Jewish Federations and over 300 Network communities, which raise and distribute more than $2 billion annually for social welfare, social services and educational needs. The Federation movement, collectively among the top 10 charities on the continent, protects and enhances the well-being of Jews worldwide through the values of Tikkun Olam (repairing the world), Tzedakah (charity and social justice) and Torah (Jewish learning).