The Nonprofit Security Grant Program

We urge Congress to increase funding for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program to $25 million in FY 2017.

Background: In 2005, Congress created the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) to bolster the physical security of at-risk nonprofit institutions, generally, and to directly address growing concerns about the safety and security of Jewish communal institutions in the post-9/11 environment. NSGP, administered by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), provides small grants of up to $75,000 within designated high-risk urban areas, including Chicago, to be used for the acquisition and installation of physical security enhancements, including fencing, bollards, and other barriers; lighting, video surveillance, and metal detection equipment; access controls; blast proofing and hardening of doors and windows; cyber-security measures; and related preparedness training. The program’s initial appropriation was $25 million, and dropped in successive years to a low of $10 million in FY2013.

With strong bipartisan and bi-cameral support, Congress increased the NSGP appropriation to $20 million in FY 2016 (up from $13 million in FY2015), in recognition of the growing and emerging risks to the nonprofit sector in general, and to Jewish communal institutions in particular. This increase was welcome, but short of the goal to return the program to its original funding level of $25 million. Threats to Jewish communal institutions remain alarming and are on the rise. As Congress begins its work on drafting the appropriations bills for the next fiscal year (FY 2017), there is ample justification for Congress to return the NSGP program’s funding level to $25 million.

National Justification: Jews and Jewish institutions were, again, the target of the majority (60%) of religiously motivated bias crimes in the US, according to the FBI’s most recent annual Hate Crime Statistics Report. In a statement commenting on the report, the Anti-Defamation League said that the number of religion-based crimes against Jews and Jewish sites is “deeply disturbing,” and added that, “It shows that Jews in the U.S. continue to be targeted for hate crimes at a disturbingly high rate.” The statement also raised concerns about the readiness of police agencies across the country to address these crimes.

NSGP provides an important redress. DHS and the Federal Emergency Management Agency have assessed the NSGP program to be an efficient and effective means to accomplish a great deal of security enhancement and preparedness through modest resources, and has promoted coordination and collaboration in emergency preparedness activities among private community representatives and state and local government agencies.
**Local Justification:** The Chicago metropolitan area ranks high on the Department of Homeland Security’s assessment of risk, and our local Jewish community has been the primary recipient of close to 160 NSGP grants totaling nearly $12 million in funding since the program was established in FY 2005. This program has been instrumental in securing physical security enhancements and providing preparedness training at Jewish communal institutions throughout the Chicago area, as well as other local institutions considered to be most at-risk, such as hospitals.

**Chicago-Specific Threat Illustrations:** Will be provided and distributed at Congressional meetings.

**Legislative Ask:** We urge Congress to increase funding for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program to $25 million in FY 2017. This program is critical to the safety and security of Jewish communal institutions.

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).*