

March 8, 2017

President Preckwinkle and Cook County Commissioners:

My name is Mara Ruff and I am Associate Director of Government Affairs at Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago. We fully support the anti-hate resolution and commend President Preckwinkle, Commissioner Boykin and all other supporting Cook County Commissioners for taking a stand against hate and violent actions against Jews and Muslims.

The Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago is a 116 year old non-partisan organization which represents a diverse community here at home and overseas. Our network of institutions provides health and human services to over 500,000 Chicago area residents of all faiths and ethnic backgrounds. Our facilities are located in eight districts throughout Cook County that include Sinai Health System, Holy Cross Hospital, HIAS Chicago, Jewish Child & Family Services, CJE SeniorLife, and of course, the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago and Jewish Day Schools.

The recent uptick in Anti-Semitic actions here at home is beyond alarming. Last week, the JCC Association of North America reported that, since January, over 160 bomb threats were called into JCCs and Jewish Day Schools throughout the United States and Canada. This includes two JCCs in Chicago-land, one in Hyde Park and a second in Lake Zurich, and a bomb threat just yesterday called into the Chicago Jewish Day School in Edgewater.

Other recent attacks include a swastika carved into a bench at the Illinois Holocaust Museum in Skokie and the vandalism at the Loop Synagogue, right around the corner, where the window was broken and a swastika written on the front door.

The FBI reported 5,818 hate crimes in 2015, up about 6% from the previous year. Jews, who are just 1.7% of the US population, are the target of more than 50% of all religious hate crimes. The FBI also reported Anti-Muslim hate crimes increased by 67%.

As Jews, we take seriously our responsibility to speak out against hatred, not only because the security of our own community is intertwined with that of other minority communities, but also because our moral values, as Jews and as Americans, demand it.

*Chair*

David Golder

*Executive Director*

JCRC and Government Affairs

Emily Muskovitz Sweet

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**

*Chair*

Janna Berk

*Director*

Lisa Shuger Hublitz

*Legislative Assistant*

Matthew Lustbader

**SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS**

*Chair*

Sandford Perl

*Associate Vice President*

Government & Community Partnerships

Suzanne F. Strassberger

**METRO CHICAGO**

*Chair*

Jason Friedman

*Associate Director*

State and Local Government

Mara Ruff

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Since 1975, the Jewish Federation has been the administrator of the Illinois Refugee Social Service Consortium and, through this work, have resettled over 125,000 refugees from all over the world fleeing persecution.

We are proud advocates that speak out against actions of hate, bigotry and Anti-Semitism.

I testify before you today to assure you that the Jewish Federation stands with all communities who are being targeted by hate and challenge those who seek to divide, demonize and intimidate our communities.

During the Holocaust, Jews lived through a time of fear-mongering, scapegoat-ing, and propaganda. As a Jewish people, we have a responsibility to resist efforts to push out religious and ethnic minorities' right here at home based on these very same principles.

For these reasons, we fully support and commend Cook County for taking a stand against hate and violent actions towards Jew and Muslims.

As the residents of Cook County are rich in ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity, we all have an obligation to stand up for one another, as neighbors, and push back against hate.

Respectfully Submitted,

**Mara S. Ruff**  
Associate Director, State and Local Government

*Chair*  
David Golder

*Executive Director  
JCRC and Government Affairs*  
Emily Muskovitz Sweet

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**

*Chair*  
Janna Berk

*Director*  
Lisa Shuger Hublitz

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*Chair*  
Jason Friedman

*Associate Director  
State and Local Government*  
Mara Ruff

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