



January 25, 2024

Testimony of Nava Greenfield, Orthodox Union / Project Protect

Before the 2024 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Public Protection

Good afternoon Chair Krueger, Chair Weinstein, legislative fiscal committee members and other distinguished members of the Senate and Assembly. Thank you for the opportunity today to discuss the safety and security of our communities.

My name is Nava Greenfield, I am a Community Advocate of Project Protect. But more importantly I am a mother, a daughter – a concerned constituent.

Project Protect, an initiative of the Orthodox Union works to secure and implement critical government funding to protect institutions at risk for hate crimes.

Just a little over a month ago, a man fired a shotgun twice outside of a Jewish temple – only 2 miles from where we sit today. These incidents are not isolated and demonstrate the urgent need for increased funding to protect vulnerable communities.

I sit before you today to **request an increase in funding for the Securing Communities Against Hate Crimes Grant Program to \$100 million and to ask that security personnel be covered under the grant.** This grant is essential to ensuring the safety and security of nonprofit organizations that are at risk of hate crimes or attacks due to their ideology, beliefs, or mission.

In the Executive Budget, Governor Kathy Hochul proposed \$35million for the Securing Communities Against Hate Crimes Grant – a \$10 million increase from previous years. Since the October 7th Hamas attacks in Israel, there has been a surge in hate crimes and bias incidents against Jewish and Muslim communities across the State – specifically a more than 330% increase, according to NYPD data. While we are grateful for the Governor’s commitment to securing the safety of our communities, the proposed funding increase to the grant program is not enough to address the 330% rise in hate fueled incidents.

Throughout the years, the Securing Communities Against Hate Crimes grant has been crucial in providing funding to strengthen security measures and prevent hate crimes against non-profit day care centers, faith-based schools, community centers, cultural museums, and places of worship. However, I would like to bring to your attention a significant gap in this program – it does not permit the use of grant funds for hiring security personnel. The increase in crimes heightens the need for enhanced security measures, including skilled personnel. According to a recent survey

conducted by the Orthodox Union, there has been a 47 percent increase in average security spending since October 7th among the at-risk organizations that responded. Furthermore, security guards account for 66 percent of this increased security spending.

The recent increase in threats to faith-based communities has forced at-risk institutions to increase the presence of security personnel – an expense that significantly outweighs other security expenses. Trained security personnel can deter potential threats, respond quickly in the event of an emergency, and are invaluable in creating a safe environment.

We ask that you **listen to the needs of the communities that are at risk of hate crimes, and take a preventive rather than reactive approach to deterring these awful incidents.** Including personnel costs in the Securing Communities Against Hate Crimes Grant Program and increasing funding to \$100 million can significantly enhance the effectiveness of the program, ensuring that vulnerable institutions have the necessary resources to safeguard against hate crimes.