

Minnesota Senate Judiciary & Public Safety Committee
SF 604 – Minnesota Supplemental Nonprofit Security Grant Program

Statement of David Goldenberg
ADL Midwest Regional Director
March 8, 2023

Dear Chairman Latz and Committee Members,

My name is David Goldenberg and I am the Regional Director for the Anti-Defamation League Midwest Region. ADL supports SF 604 and the state funding of a supplemental nonprofit security grant program.

ADL is a 110-year-old organization whose mission is to “stop the defamation of the Jewish people and secure justice and fair treatment to all.” ADL is a world leader in countering hatred and extremism in all forms, and has organizational expertise around the need to protect vulnerable communities and institutions.

The faith community, at large, has found itself increasingly under threat of violent attack in Minnesota, the U.S. and around the world. In fact, it is estimated that at least 617 worshipers were killed at houses of worship in the U.S. between 1999 and 2019. This includes the single deadliest anti-Jewish attack in U.S. history at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh in 2018, the murder of nine members of Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston in 2015, and the murder of six members of the Sikh Temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin in 2012. Although not a deadly attack, the 2022 hostage situation at the synagogue in Colleyville, Texas, serves as another stark reminder of the threats that faith communities face. The problem isn’t unique to minority religious groups or marginalized communities. Between 2000 and 2020, American churches experienced 19 fatal shootings.

In Minnesota, the number of anti-Jewish incidents recorded by ADL has grown dramatically. According to ADL’s 2021 Audit of Antisemitic Incidents released last year, Minnesota ranked ninth among states for the highest number of reported anti-Jewish incidents. ADL received 75 reports of vandalism, harassment and assault targeting Jewish institutions and individuals in Minnesota in 2021 compared to 23 in 2020.

The problem many congregations face is that taking necessary security precautions is often cost-prohibitive. Security measures fall generally into three categories: training, hardening of facilities, and security staffing. While there are good training resources available free of charge, there are very real costs associated with the other two prongs of protecting houses of worship. From the installation of security cameras and alarm systems to bollards intended to prevent a car from driving into congregants gathering at an entrance or exit, to shatter resistant film on windows, to adequate fire mitigation or cyber-security, there are a wide range of needs that each faith institution must consider in addressing its security needs.

SF 604 provides critical resources to assist institutions in funding their security improvements. The bill recognizes the unique vulnerabilities shared by the entire faith

community. And, it recognizes that enhancing the safety and security of faith institutions and nonprofit organizations improves overall public safety when these places are less vulnerable to a deadly attack. In addition to serving as places of prayer, many of our religious institutions house schools, day care centers and non-profit organizations.

For these reasons and more, we urge the Committee to support this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Goldenberg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

David Goldenberg
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