

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Members of the Committee:

### **Background and Statement of Interest**

Ohio Jewish Communities is the statewide government advocacy, public affairs, and community relations voice of Ohio's eight Jewish community federations and their 150 nonprofit agencies serving the cultural, educational, health and behavioral health, social, and workforce services needs of thousands of Ohioans of every faith – and of none – each day. We submit this testimony on their behalf as well.

We are here today to ask that you restore critical security funding for vulnerable nonprofits and faith-based communities. This program helps churches, mosques, and synagogues, preschools and summer camps, senior living facilities and social service agencies. It helps religiously affiliated groups and totally secular ones. As we often say, how many programs does the General Assembly fund that every religious faith, and cause focused nonprofits on opposite sides of divisive issues – from Planned Parenthood to Right to Life and from Moms Demand Action to Buckeye Firearms can have equal access to? The sub bill cut this program by \$4 million per fiscal year, an \$8 million hit that is nearly 50 percent of the program total. With violence on the rise from extremists of all types, now is the worst time to cut such funding.

### **The Threat Remains Real, and Rising**

Speaking from the Jewish community's perspective, it just keeps going from bad to worse. Political violence targeting Jews is rising fast.

When they say "globalize the intifada" everyone now knows what they mean. They don't mean "free speech." They mean terror attacks. They mean cold-blooded murder.

A brutal double assassination of Israeli embassy staffers in Washington, DC – at an event discussing humanitarian aid no less – where the terrorist followed one victim as she tried to crawl away. He shot her again at close range.

An event in support of the hostages taken from Israel over 600 days ago – including American citizens – is firebombed, injuring eight, including children and the elderly.

Those are just the latest two attacks to catch everyone's attention.

### **A Troubling Trend**

FBI statistics show that religious bias crimes are up 63 percent; attacks on Jews and the Jewish community make up an astonishing 68 percent of such crimes, and 15 percent

of all hate crimes reported target the Jewish community. The 2023 numbers are the highest recorded anti-Jewish attacks in the history of FBI record keeping.

### **A Critical Public Private Partnership – and a Model One**

Our community spends significant funds to exercise our First Amendment rights of freedom of assembly and freedom of worship. But we – and other cause focused nonprofits and faith-based groups - also rely on the funding provided by you here in the General Assembly through the DeWine Administration's Department of Public Safety.

These funds pay for police officers to guard our children at their schools and worshipers at our synagogues. These funds pay for the cameras and sensors, the locks, the gates, and the blast proof windows at our community centers and senior living facilities. These funds help connect law enforcement more deeply with our communities so they can respond immediately to critical incidents as they unfold.

But there's more to this than just officers on patrol and target hardening efforts. Ohio spends far less on this program than some other states, like California, Florida, and New York. But Ohio is increasingly held up as a national model for its innovative approach to such funding. The Ohio spirit is found in pilot projects or creative parts of the program that are the envy of other states. As Ohio leads on these programs, from drone use to mailroom security, other states look here and wonder if they too can cut costs with targeted investments that deliver incredible value not just in terms of dollars saved, but in lives made safer, and campuses more secure.

We would argue the return on investment the state gets for these funds may be the very best of any program in the budget.

### **Action Needed – Restore the Cut Funds**

Given the safety concerns on Ohio's streets and campuses and given Ohio's national role in this space, we urge you to restore these funds for this vital program, which unfortunately is needed now more than ever.

Thank you. I'm happy to take questions. And, we look forward to working with the Committee, the Senate, and the House, as well as the Governor and DPS to ensure this program remains the best in the nation.

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