

TESTIMONY: UJA-FEDERATION OF NEW YORK
Before the Joint Fiscal Committees of the New York State Legislature
Public Safety Budget Hearing for Fiscal Year 2024-2025

Submitted by:
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On behalf of UJA-Federation of New York, our network of nonprofit partners, and those we serve, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the importance of maintaining and expanding support for vulnerable institutions.

Established more than 100 years ago, UJA-Federation of New York is one of the nation’s largest local philanthropies. Central to UJA’s mission is to care for those in need—identifying and meeting the needs of New Yorkers of all backgrounds and Jews everywhere. UJA supports an expansive network of nearly 100 nonprofit organizations serving those that are most vulnerable and in need of programs and services, and allocates over \$170 million each year to combat poverty and food insecurity, nurture mental health and well-being, respond to crises here and across the globe, and strengthen Jewish life.

Since October 7th, there has been a surge in hate and bias incidents. According to the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), antisemitic incidents in the US saw an almost 400% increase in the first two weeks of the Israel Hamas war. In New York, the number of antisemitic crimes in October of 2023 marked a 214% increase over the same month last year, according to data from the NYPD. This is on top of the 39% increase in antisemitic incidents seen by the Jewish community in New York from 2021 to 2022.

UJA has taken steps to mobilize the community and other allies to unequivocally denounce anti-Jewish hate, as well as stepped up in several other ways, including:

- Strengthening the work of the Community Security Initiative (CSI) by allocating philanthropic emergency dollars to bolster security at 400 under-resourced Jewish communal institutions in the New York area.
- Significantly supplementing funding to 11 Hillels (serving over 20 campuses) to strengthen Jewish programming, support mental health, increase campus organizers, and provide legal counsel for students and academics facing harassment.
- Leading efforts in New York to actualize the White House’s “National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism,” particularly in K-12 public school education, offering trainings on Jewish issues and creating relevant content.

- Providing training and material to DEI and HR professionals to help them understand the contemporary face of antisemitism and supporting Jewish employees in the workplace, ensuring that they know their rights and know where to go if they experience harassment.

UJA urges the Governor and the Legislature to take the following budget and legislative actions:

1) Securing Communities Against Hate Crimes:

- a. UJA appreciates the Governor’s inclusion of \$35 million for the Securing Communities Against Hate Crimes initiative. However, given the extent of the increase in hate crimes, especially following October 7th, UJA urges the legislature to increase funding to \$100 million. In addition to the funding increase, there are a number of programmatic changes that UJA recommends, including:
 - i. **Expand eligible uses** of the funding to include personnel both contract and on-staff security guards).
 - ii. **Award Deadlines:** The administering agency should have **deadlines for issuing RFPs and making award decisions** so that beneficiaries can address their security needs. For funding appropriated in June 2024, the administering agency must open grant applications by December 2024 (or earlier) and make final grant decisions by February 2025. This change ensures that the intended beneficiaries can quickly address their security vulnerabilities.
 - iii. **Past Expense Reimbursement Model:** The program should be restructured to reimburse applicants for already-incurred expenditures on eligible security expenses – as with the existing Nonpublic School Safety Equipment (NPSE) Grant program.
 - iv. **Streamlined Procurement:** The requirements surrounding procuring eligible security investments and reporting grant progress should be simplified and sped up. The State should create a simple but effective way of ensuring that fair procurement processes take place.

2) Nonpublic School Safety Equipment (NPSE) Funding:

- a. **UJA thanks the Governor for including \$45 million for the Nonpublic School Safety Equipment program. However, students and families are feeling increasingly concerned about their safety on school campuses. The presence of highly trained security personnel can deter potential threats, respond quickly in the event of an emergency, and provide an added layer of protection, ensuring children can learn in a safe environment. UJA urges the legislature to increase funding for the NPSE program to \$90 million.**

3) UJA advocates for state and city educational institutions to adopt a definition of antisemitism, that states, “Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their

property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.” This action would follow the Executive Order put in place by the Biden Administration calling on federal departments enforcing Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to adopt this definition.

- 4) **UJA supports the passage of Senate bill S7737 proposed by Senator Hoylman to expand the list of crimes eligible for prosecution as hate crimes.** Current law only allows a limited number of criminal offenses to be charged as hate crimes and excludes offenses such as bias-motivated gang assault, graffiti, falsely reporting an incident, and others. The bill establishes these actions as hate crimes and ensures that the law can protect people and property from the pervasive effect of hate crimes. Clearer guidelines will assist law enforcement and the judicial system to properly process hate-related incidents. This action sends the strong message that New York intends to protect New Yorkers against all forms of intolerance and hate.

- 5) **UJA Supports the passage of bill S895/A6789-A proposed by Assemblymember Lee and Senator Hoylman.** This bill holds social media platforms accountable for spreading hate fueled violence, including antisemitism, by requiring more transparency related to certain social media terms of service. Studies conducted by the Anti-Defamation League and the Tech Transparency Project found that some of the biggest social media platforms and search engines contribute to the proliferation of online antisemitism, hate, and extremism through their own tools. Many tech companies have little-to-no external oversight and social media platforms have not taken appropriate steps to manage the spread of hate speech, racism, and misinformation. Furthermore, most do not provide clear policies around enforcement, let alone clear reports on their enforcement process. The goal of this bill is to stop the spread of hate speech on social media platforms and enable platforms to take action to counter antisemitism. Requiring social media companies to report their moderation policies will help boost accountability, transparency, and protect users from hate.

UJA-Federation of New York respectfully urges your consideration and support of these vital investments to protect communities from hate and keep New Yorkers safe. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. Please contact Ariel Savransky at savranskya@ujafedny.org or 212-836-1360 with any questions.