

Congressional Testimony

“Never Again: Addressing the Rise of Antisemitism and Supporting
Older Americans”

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Thank you, Chairman Scott, Ranking Member Gillibrand, and Members of the Special Committee on Aging, for inviting me to speak before you today.

My name is Rebecca Federman, and I am privileged to serve as the Senior Director for the Community Security Initiative of New York's Intelligence Desk. In 2019, in the wake of the deadliest attacks against American Jews – 15 dead Jews in 14 months across Pittsburgh, Poway, Jersey City, and Monsey, many of whom were elderly individuals – the umbrella Jewish organizations in New York, UJA-Federation and JCRC-NY, founded the Community Security Initiative as our way of actualizing Never Again. CSI, as the organization is colloquially known, is a comprehensive program designed to protect and enhance security for the 1.8-million-person Jewish community in New York and in Southwest Connecticut. We help ensure Jews are never again murdered in our houses of worship, schools, community centers, summer camps, or grocery stores.

I supervise our Intelligence Desk, a team of four threat intelligence analysts, whose main goal is to detect, investigate, and disrupt violent threats targeting the Jewish community. The investigations we undertake are politically and ideologically agnostic – we've thwarted violent neo-Nazis, disrupted ISIS-inspired individuals, and other variants of antisemites with weapons. We spend our days knee-deep in the sewers of the deep, dark and surface web, scouring the internet for threats.

It is important to note that our focus is not on vile, first amendment protected antisemitic speech, but rather a higher threshold, focusing on those threats that include: 1) an explicit expression of intent to commit violence, such as "I am going to shoot up a synagogue"; 2) an indication of possessing weapons with intent to use them; or 3) an expressed allegiance to a U.S. designated terrorist organization. And in 2024 alone, we elevated a total of 221 life-threatening instances to law enforcement and partner organizations both locally and globally for them to urgently respond. This is undeniably a profoundly disturbing number.

Fortunately, CSI works hand in hand with law enforcement partners at the local, state, and federal level and in many cases sharing of this threat information has enabled law enforcement to act and to disrupt potentially deadly threats.

Just two months ago, this past Valentine's Day, the CSI Intelligence Desk thwarted an attack against Central Synagogue, a prominent synagogue in Manhattan. One of my analysts detected a post on X in which the user indicated his intention to visit the synagogue, naming his location, date and time, and in a subsequent post, evoked Adolf Hitler, claiming if he was stopped, he would kill tenfold as many Jews as Hitler did. Working closely with our partners at the NYPD and New Jersey State Police, they were able to locate this individual as he was en route to New York City, arresting him as he attempted to enter the Lincoln Tunnel, a main thoroughfare connecting New Jersey to Manhattan. This is but one of many examples of the antisemitic terrorist threats the CSI team has helped to thwart.

The threat landscape facing the Jews in America and around the world is vast and diverse, particularly in the wake of Hamas' October 7, 2023 terror attack against Israel. Of the instances we elevated to law enforcement for which we were able to determine the online user's ideology, 60% were motivated by white supremacist ideology and 40% by jihadi ideology, such as individuals expressing their allegiance to ISIS or Hamas.

CSI assesses that another violent attack targeting the Jewish community in America is increasingly likely. Based on our analysis, CSI assesses the greatest threats to the Jewish community come from three main vectors: a homegrown violent extremist motivated by the current Israel-Hamas war; an individual associated with or inspired by ISIS; or a Racially and Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremist fueled by white supremacist and neo-Nazi beliefs.

Indeed, recent thwarted attacks—some stemming from CSI Intelligence threat detection—corroborate our “triple threat” assessment. In July 2024, a Canada-based individual planned to target Chabad's world headquarters in Brooklyn, NY with a mass-casualty attack in the name of ISIS, which was fortunately thwarted by a joint FBI-Canadian law enforcement operation. In January 2025, based on a tip from CSI to the FBI, a white supremacist in Beverly, Massachusetts was arrested with weapons, ammunition, and a Nazi flag after he posted online that it was time to kill Jews and that he had the addresses of every Jew in his neighborhood. And of course, just a few weeks ago, Governor Josh Shapiro's home was firebombed during Passover, by an attacker allegedly motivated by the current Israel-Hamas war and the Governor's pro-Israel stance.

A large-scale, violent attack is not the only threat facing the Jewish community in America. Every day, Jewish Americans are victims of antisemitic incidents that range from vandalism and harassment to assault. Just last week, the Anti-Defamation League released its annual audit of antisemitic incidents for 2024. Unsurprisingly, the 9,354 incidents recorded were the highest on record since ADL began tracking these statistics in 1979. Assaults increased by 21% over last year's data, and 58% of the incidents the ADL recorded in 2024 contained elements of anti-Israel bias, perpetrated by both anti-Israel organizations and white supremacist groups.

Also included in ADL's audit data, was an 84% increase in antisemitic activity on college campuses across the country. Since October 7th, Jewish students began feeling unsafe on their college campuses, often subjected to intimidation, harassment, and disruptions of their events, classes, and campus life. In response to the frequent vitriol and disruptive protest activity, CSI launched our Campus Security Initiative, working with Campus Hillels and Chabad Rabbis as well as Campus Security professionals at twenty-five universities along the Amtrak corridor from Boston to Washington, D.C. in order to meet their needs. On some campuses, our role is to provide guidance for Jewish campus professionals and

students. For other campuses, CSI provides funding for security guards to protect events. For every campus, we offer a personal security app for students and my analysts prepare a weekly campus report detailing the key trends, incidents, and upcoming protest activities taking place on campuses.

Looking at the trendlines across the twenty-five campuses, we assess that campuses are no longer just centers of first amendment protected protest. While not all campuses have seen the same level of protest activity, harassment, and intimidation of Jewish students, in some cases, campuses have become launchpads for violence and hate. Late last year, at George Mason University, a student plotted an ISIS-inspired terror attack against the Israeli Consulate in New York. Also, during 2024, at the University of Pittsburgh, Jewish students were physically assaulted during a protest. And at Columbia University, during the past year, Jewish students were spat on, shoved, and chased off campus by mobs shouting, “We don’t want no Zionists here.” This is not activism—it is antisemitic violence, growing louder, bolder, and more dangerous by the day.

Policy Proscriptions – Keeping Jewish Americans Safe from Antisemitism and Terrorist Threats

In order to address the rise of antisemitism, CSI proposes the following policy recommendations:

1. In light of the alarming rise in antisemitic threats and acts of violence across the United States, it is imperative that Congress takes swift and decisive action by increasing funding for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP). Jewish community institutions—including synagogues, schools, and community centers—have become increasingly frequent targets of harassment, vandalism, and violent threats. In 2023, despite \$274.5 million in appropriations, only 43% of grant applications were funded, leaving a significant number of at-risk institutions without access to critical security enhancements. CSI, in partnership with the Jewish Federations of North America, respectfully urges Congress to include \$500 million in the final FY25 and FY26 appropriations bills for the NSGP. An expanded investment will ensure that vulnerable nonprofits have the necessary resources to harden potential targets, train for emergency scenarios, and protect their communities from those who seek to do them harm.
2. In addition, we strongly urge passage of the Antisemitism Awareness Act (AAA). Following the October 7th terrorist attack by Hamas, Jewish students across the United States have experienced a disturbing increase in harassment and intimidation, particularly on college campuses. The AAA would require the U.S. Department of Education to use the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism when evaluating discrimination

complaints under Title VI. The IHRA definition—endorsed by over 160 Jewish communities and organizations worldwide—provides concrete, internationally accepted examples to help distinguish protected free speech from unlawful, antisemitic conduct. Adoption of the Antisemitism Awareness Act will give the Department of Education a critical tool to combat antisemitism effectively while upholding constitutional rights, and it will reaffirm America's commitment to protecting the safety and dignity of all students.

3. Finally, to protect students, safeguard campuses, and ensure a peaceful end to the semester, colleges must robustly enforce Title VI guidelines, including time, place, and manner restrictions, permitting requirements, and enforcing campus codes of conduct that protect Jewish students. Serious consequences, such as suspension, expulsion, and bans from campus events, including commencement, must be swiftly imposed. Congress has an important role to play here, ensuring that the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) within the U.S. Department of Education, which handles Title VI investigations, receives the resources needed to conduct robust investigations.

Thank you for your bipartisan partnership and leadership fighting antisemitism. I look forward to your questions.