March 7, 2017

The Honorable John F. Kelly
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20015

The Honorable Jeff Sessions
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

The Honorable James B. Comey
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20535

Dear Secretary Kelly, Attorney General Sessions, and Director Comey:

We write to underscore the need for swift action with regard to the deeply troubling series of anonymous bomb threats made against Jewish Community Centers (JCCs), Jewish Day Schools, Synagogues and other buildings affiliated with Jewish organizations or institutions across the country. We thank you for your recent efforts and ask that you inform us of the actions that your Departments plan to take to address threats against these and other religious institutions. We stand ready to work with you to ensure that these centers can continue to serve their communities free from violence and intimidation.

It has become clear that threats of violence against individual JCCs are not isolated incidents. According to the Jewish Federations of North America, in the first two months of 2017 alone, at least 98 incidents against JCCs and Jewish Day Schools at 81 locations in 33 states have been reported. These cowardly acts aim to create an atmosphere of fear and disrupt the important programs and services offered by JCCs to everyone in the communities they serve, including in our states. In addition to reports of incidents at JCCs and Jewish Day Schools, there have been incidents at cemeteries in both St. Louis and Philadelphia involving the desecration of Jewish headstones. This is completely unacceptable and un-American.

We are concerned that the number of incidents is accelerating and failure to address and deter these threats will place innocent people at risk and threaten the financial viability of JCCs, many of which are institutions in their communities. Your Departments can provide crucial assistance by helping JCCs, Jewish Day Schools and Synagogues improve their physical security, deterring threats from being made, and investigating and prosecuting those making these threats or who may
seek to act on these threats in the future. We encourage you to communicate with individual JCCs, the JCC Association of North America, Jewish Day Schools, Synagogues and other Jewish community institutions regarding victim assistance, grant opportunities or other federal assistance that may be available to enhance security measures and improve preparedness. We also recognize the anti-Semitic sentiment behind this spate of threats and encourage your Departments to continue to inform state and local law enforcement organizations of their obligations under the Hate Crime Statistics Act and other federal laws.

We are ready to work with you to address this pressing issue, and we look forward to your responses about the actions you intend to take to address, deter, and prevent this threat.

Sincerely,

Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

Rob Portman
United States Senator

Bill Nelson
United States Senator

Marco Rubio
United States Senator

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

Mitch McConnell
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

John Cornyn
United States Senator
Jack Reed  
United States Senator

Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator

Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator

Patrick Leahy  
United States Senator

Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator

Todd Young  
United States Senator

Bob Corker  
United States Senator

Susan Collins  
United States Senator

Jerry Moran  
United States Senator

Roy Blunt  
United States Senator

Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senator

Dean Heller  
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator
Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator

Ron Johnson  
United States Senator

Robert Menendez  
United States Senator

James Lankford  
United States Senator

Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator

Johnny Isakson  
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator

Steve Daines  
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator

Orrin Hatch  
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator

John Boozman  
United States Senator

Joe Donnelly  
United States Senator

John McCain  
United States Senator
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

Claire McCaskill
United States Senator

John Kennedy
United States Senator

Roger Wicker
United States Senator

John Thune
United States Senator

Tim Scott
United States Senator

Pat Roberts
United States Senator

James E. Risch
United States Senator

Richard Burr
United States Senator
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

John Hoeven
United States Senator

Patty Murray
United States Senator

David Perdue
United States Senator

Al Franken
United States Senator

Luther Strange
United States Senator

Ben Cardin
United States Senator

Thad Cochran
United States Senator

Jon Tester
United States Senator

Richard Shelby
United States Senator

Mark R. Warner
United States Senator

Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Ted Cruz
United States Senator