February 23, 2017

The Honorable John F. Kelly
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20016

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 express our deep concern regarding the recent spate of anonymous bomb threats made via telephone against Jewish Community Centers (JCCs) across the nation. We urge the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice to swiftly assess the situation and to advise Congress on what specific steps are being taken, or will be taken, to deter such threats from being made, to identify and prosecute the perpetrators for violations of federal criminal laws, and to enable JCCs to enhance security measures such as physical barriers and guards, in the event that an individual seeks to act upon these threats.

This is not an idle concern, given that there have been at least three casualty-causing attacks at JCCs or other Jewish institutions in the last two decades—in 2014 at a Kansas JCC, in 2006 at the Jewish Federation of Seattle, and in 1999 at a California JCC. This is a national problem and, as such, it requires a national solution.

In the first two months of 2017 alone, there have been 68 incidents targeting 53 JCCs in 26 states, according to JCC Association of North America. A number of JCCs, such as the Roth Family Jewish Community Center of Greater Orlando, have received multiple threats.

These phone calls have an immediate emotional impact, of course, but they also have an economic impact. JCCs provide a range of educational and community services for Jewish and non-Jewish individuals and families, with a particular focus on children and youth. The individuals who make these calls no doubt recognize that bomb threats, particularly when repeated, can compromise and even destroy a JCC’s financial future.
We urge you to approach this issue with a sense of urgency, and to work in partnership with state and territory governments, local law enforcement officials, JCC Association of North America, individual JCCs, and Jewish community institutions and leaders to address the threat in a holistic manner. We look forward to your response regarding the specific steps being taken to prevent and respond to this threat.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Murphy  
Member of Congress

Val Butler Demings  
Member of Congress

Marcy Kaptur  
Member of Congress

Grace Meng  
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress

Joseph Crowley  
Member of Congress

Daniel M. Donovan, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Tim Ryan  
Member of Congress

Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress

Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress

Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress
Jimmie Panetta  
Member of Congress

Rosa DeLauro  
Member of Congress

John Lewis  
Member of Congress

Paul Tonko  
Member of Congress

Darren Soto  
Member of Congress

Nita M. Lowey  
Member of Congress

Matt Cartwright  
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson Lee  
Member of Congress

Leonard Lance  
Member of Congress

John P. Sarbanes  
Member of Congress

Jim Cooper  
Member of Congress

Dwight Evans  
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress

John A. Yarmuth  
Member of Congress
Ryan A. Costello  
Member of Congress

Elizabeth H. Esty  
Member of Congress

Daniel W. Lipinski  
Member of Congress

Kathy Castor  
Member of Congress

John B. Larson  
Member of Congress

Jim Himes  
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress

Eddie Bernice Johnson  
Member of Congress

Anna G. Eshoo  
Member of Congress

Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress

Sean Patrick Maloney  
Member of Congress

Ted Lieu  
Member of Congress

James R. Langevin  
Member of Congress

Bill Foster  
Member of Congress

Keith Ellison  
Member of Congress

Peter J. Visclosky  
Member of Congress
Henry C. "Frank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

Salud O. Carbajal
Member of Congress

David A. Trott
Member of Congress

Robert A. Brady
Member of Congress

Mike Thompson
Member of Congress

Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress

Julia Brownley
Member of Congress

Bill Posey
Member of Congress

Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress

Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress

John J. Faso
Member of Congress

Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress

Rodney P. Frelinghuysen
Member of Congress

Doris Matsui
Member of Congress

Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress

Gene Green
Member of Congress
Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

Ron Kind
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

Bobby Scott
Member of Congress

Vern Buchanan
Member of Congress

Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress

Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

Marc A. Veasey
Member of Congress

Albio Sires
Member of Congress

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress

Jared Polis
Member of Congress
Vicente Gonzalez  
Member of Congress

Joseph P. Kennedy, III  
Member of Congress

Mia Love  
Member of Congress

Steve Stivers  
Member of Congress

Patrick J. Tiberi  
Member of Congress

Tom O'Halleran  
Member of Congress

Michelle Lujan Grisham  
Member of Congress

Al Green  
Member of Congress