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The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr Avenue SE
Washington, D.C. 20258

VIA EMAIL

Dear Secretary Noem,

I am writing to demand an immediate rescission of the unconstitutional, illegal, and immoral restrictions that the Department of Homeland Security has placed on religious organizations that receive funding under the Nonprofit Security Grant Program.

This program, which I have long supported and successfully advocated to increase funding, is vital to ensuring that our religious institutions and other nonprofit organizations are protected from terrorist attacks and bias based violence. This funding allowed for security measures that such institutions and organizations would not have otherwise been able to afford. I am proud of the ways in which Connecticut religious institutions have appropriately used these funds to better protect their congregants and places of worship.

Unfortunately, we have seen increases in violence against Jewish, Muslim, and other religious groups based on bias and prejudice – much of which has been incited or condoned by members of this Administration and other individuals online. Despite these upticks in violence and the successful use of this program by a broad swath of organizations, you have now decided to demand that religious groups take steps that run counter to their beliefs in order to receive such funds.

These new restrictions may indeed run afoul of the constitutional and statutory rights of these religious organizations, which may result in civil liability on the part of your Administration. Such new restrictions include: certification by grant recipients that they will cease programs and activities that ensure the fair treatment of congregants and promote tolerance and understanding; prohibiting offering food, shelter, and other life-saving assistance to undocumented residents; and turning over documentation and information held by religious institutions totally unrelated to the use of the grant funding.

It defies logic that an Administration purporting to support the free exercise of religion would restrict practitioners and religious institutions in these ways. The Nonprofit Security

Grant Program seeks to protect religious institutions from violence, not to use such institutions as a pawn to achieve the Administration's larger nefarious aims.

I strongly urge your rescission of these potentially unconstitutional and illegal restrictions and demands of our churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques that simply seek protection from hateful violence.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Richard Blumenthal". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Richard" and last name "Blumenthal" clearly legible.

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator