

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 30, 2018

Dear Friends:

I am writing to you from Youngstown, where I just left a meeting with the leadership of the Jewish Community Center (JCC). We talked about what happened in Pittsburgh, how it was the worst anti-Semitic incident in American history, and where we go from here to stop anti-Semitism and hatred and to keep the Jewish community safe. Youngstown is a mere 65 miles from where the unspeakable tragedy happened on Saturday, but whether you were near or far from the tragedy, the pain and anguish it caused has reverberated throughout our country and the world.

As I said at the JCC in Youngstown this morning and on Saturday as the news broke, I want you to know that I stand in solidarity with the Jewish community as we mourn the murder of 11 innocent people attending the synagogue to worship. My wife Jane and I are heartbroken by this cowardly act in a house of worship and are praying for the victims, their families, and the courageous first responders who were injured on the scene. In Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dayton, and other areas across the state, thousands of people have gathered over the past couple of days to mourn those tragically killed and to stand resolute in rejecting anti-Semitism and hate. I know for so many of you, for your parents and grandparents, the United States has represented a place of hope, freedom, and safety in a world that has so often been so cruel to the Jewish people. The United States needs to continue to be that place. I consider it my job and the job of every elected leader to speak up against hate, bigotry, and anti-Semitism wherever and whenever it rears its ugly head—so that our fellow citizens know it simply has no place here. That is my job and my obligation and pledge to be by your side in that effort.

As we work to stop the hatred and anti-Semitism, we must do all we can to keep the Jewish community safe. I have been working to ensure Jewish facilities across Ohio have access to federal security grants to help improve the safety at their facilities. Earlier this year, the Senate Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs Committee approved two of my amendments as part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Authorization Act to expand access to this funding and to ensure that nonprofit institutions like JCCs have a seat at the table at Joint Counterterrorism Awareness Workshops. Today I sent a letter to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Minority Leader Chuck Schumer urging them to complete work this year on the DHS Authorization Act and provide appropriate resources to synagogues and other nonprofits across our country that are vulnerable to acts of terrorism. We need to get this done, and I am hopeful that the Senate will act this year.

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COMMITTEES:  
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There are other things we can do. In March of 2017, I led a letter signed by all 100 senators urging the Attorney General, the DHS Secretary, and the FBI Director to take action in response to the anonymous bomb threats made against JCCs, Jewish Day Schools, and synagogues. In May of this year, I led a bipartisan letter calling on the president to appoint a Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism, a position at the U.S. Department of State that has remained vacant for nearly two years. In addition, I believe that the anti-Israel boycott, divestment and sanctions movement (BDS) is a form of anti-Semitism, and I am working to pass my bipartisan bill to prevent international organizations from engaging in this offensive tactic. We need to continue that bipartisanship and unity.

I look forward to continuing to work with our Jewish community to ensure we are doing all we can to protect our facilities across the state of Ohio and around the country. In the meantime, my deepest condolences go out to our brothers and sisters not far from here in Pittsburgh, and like you do in every religious service in every synagogue, I join you in praying for peace.

All best,



Rob Portman