



NJ STATE ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH FEDERATIONS

February 11, 2013

Hon. Christopher H. Smith
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Smith,

The N.J. State Association of Jewish Federations and its eleven constituent federations and their network of affiliated and beneficiary agencies are pleased to acknowledge your leadership in introducing H.R. 592, the Federal Disaster Assistance Nonprofit Fairness Act. We support the legislation which would authorize those houses of worship impacted and devastated by Hurricane Sandy to receive assistance through the recently enacted Sandy relief funding.

Our houses of worship, as with other faith based institutions, play a crucial role every day providing stability, comfort and serving as a community resource. With the hurricane's impact still very much in evidence for our state, we have needed houses of worship more than ever to ease the path to recovery for community and each of their individual members. Even though the church, mosque, temple or synagogue may have been physically damaged, houses of worship continue to provide essential response services to people in need.

Jewish Federations in those areas that suffered most from Sandy's might assisted their synagogues and congregants to overcome the immediate crisis through financial aid, respite and relief while securing dozens of volunteers to help rebuild damaged buildings in the greater local community. The Jewish federation of Monmouth County, as one of the communities hardest hit by the hurricane, the relief funding provided by it and its partner Federations in the state have enabled Monmouth to meet a wide array of human service needs in the county. Their approach has been strategic, identifying both short-term and long-term needs and dislocations following the storm, empowering our partners in their efforts to respond, and connecting those who could most benefit to these resources. Most importantly, the Federation has been proactive in spreading word throughout Monmouth County that the Jewish community is here to help in storm recovery efforts.

Jewish Family and Children Service organizations replaced lost clothing, provided gift cards for food, counseled Sandy victims easing their anxiety and emotional pain and made available flexible repayment loans to help families and businesses recover. The Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest has provided \$50,000 to JFS agencies to assist with the medium and long term needs. Chabad of Hoboken received \$5,000 for counseling assistance, while federation is also developing a partnership with Union Beach, a community outside their catchment area and will provide \$10,000 toward relief efforts there.

Many of our synagogues suffered severe damage and lack the resources to rebuild. Jewish Federations, while helping houses of worship serve individuals in need, do not have the resources to support capital needs. Assistance from the Jewish Federation of Monmouth County helped “Chabad of the Shore” roof and carpet repair, as well as providing plywood to cover vulnerable windows. Temple Shalom in Aberdeen had roof damage which was repaired through Federation assistance. There were a number of other similar actions of relief provided by the Monmouth federation.

This is not only the Jewish community experience, but one shared with houses of worship of all religions. It is entirely appropriate for FEMA's aid program for private nonprofits to assist houses of worship with their rebuilding and community outreach needs.

For all the reasons stated, herein, the passage of H.R. 592 will bring equity in a time of crisis and will recognize the unselfish sacrifices made by our houses of worship in response to an event that left devastation in its wake and tragic consequences for its victims. Accordingly, the NJ State Association of Jewish Federations is pleased to support the enactment of the Federal Disaster Assistance Nonprofit Fairness Act.

Sincerely,

Ruth Cole

Ruth Cole, President

Jacob Toporek

Jacob Toporek, Executive Director