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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

CHAIRMAN, CONGRESSIONAL EXECUTIVE
COMMISSION ON CHINA

CHAIRMAN, GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBAL
HUMAN RIGHTS, AND INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

CO-CHAIRMAN, TOM LANTOS HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSION

SENIOR MEMBER, HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE

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May 7, 2024

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
H-307, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
H-307, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
H-310, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Matt Cartwright
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro, and Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Cartwright:

I write to respectfully request Community Project Funding in fiscal year 2025 for the *Lakewood Shomrim Radio Communication Enhancement Project*, in Lakewood, New Jersey in my Congressional District (NJ-04).

The Lakewood Shomrim Radio Communication Enhancement Project is designed to significantly enhance the effectiveness of government and law enforcement officials in protecting and serving the public. The amount requested for this Community Project Funding is \$275,000, to be used to upgrade the radio communication infrastructure for the Lakewood Shomrim, a vital volunteer organization that works hand-in-hand with the Lakewood Township Police, Ocean County Sheriff's Office and Ocean County Prosecutors Office, in a commitment to law and public safety. Funding for this invaluable project would provide the acquisition and installation of upgraded radio communication equipment to give crucial support to emergency response efforts in the fastest-growing town in New Jersey.

By implementing a state-of-the-art radio communication system, Shomrim will be better poised to help police and emergency respond to a greater range of emergencies within the community. With a dedicated team of 100 volunteers patrolling the town in marked cars, the federal funds will greatly enhance Lakewood Shomrim's capacity to collaborate with local, county, and Federal law enforcement partners, bolster community relations, and ensure the safety and protection of residents.

Lakewood Township is a large, and rapidly growing community, with most recent estimates from the latest Census showing growth approaching 140,000 residents. Lakewood includes which includes a municipal airport, two universities (Beth Medrash Govoha and Georgian Court University), a large hospital (Robert Wood Johnson-Barnabas Monmouth Medical Center southern Campus) and more than 80 schools with 22,000 enrolled children.

Ocean County Sheriff Michael Mastronardy wrote in support of this project, saying "Shomrim has demonstrated unwavering commitment to safety through their vigilant surveillance and proactive communication efforts. Their dedication to swiftly reporting suspicious activities and cooperating seamlessly with law enforcement agencies has proven indispensable in deterring and addressing potential threats," noting he believes the proposed

grant, if approved, “will facilitate seamless coordination between Shomrim members and law enforcement personal, resulting in expedited responses to incidents and emergencies.”

Also supporting this project, Lakewood Mayor Cole stated “The Lakewood Shomrim plays a vital role in our community, tirelessly working to enhance public safety and security. Their commitment to serving and protecting residents during emergencies and times of need is commendable and greatly appreciated.” The mayor continues, “Upgrading and modernizing their radio communication infrastructure will undoubtedly improve their ability to coordinate with law enforcement agencies and responders... I am confident that this project will significantly contribute to the safety and wellbeing of our residents.”

I further note Lakewood is a majority minority community with a large Orthodox Jewish Community that has sadly all too often become the site of hatred and antisemitism. In 2023 The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) reported a 36 percent rise in antisemitism in the U.S., with five states—including New Jersey—accounting for over half of the 3,697 reported incidents. Bold, often violent attacks are sometimes manifested in Lakewood. The terrorist in the Buffalo, N.Y. mass shooting in 2022 was reported in the media to have made references to the Jewish communities in Lakewood and neighboring Toms River, also in my district. In April 2022, three Orthodox Jews in Lakewood were intentionally rammed, and one stabbed, by a motorist who was arrested and charged with multiple federal offenses including carjacking, attempted murder, bias intimidation and other charges. And in March 2022, an intruder drove through the parking lot of a congregation in nearby Toms River, not far from my main District Office, ramming cars.

Anti-Semitic vandalism and even more serious incidents have been reported in Lakewood. One synagogue reported that passersby have yelled antisemitic slurs and threats. Leaders cite one incident in 2023, when a man with a machete threatened people outside a Jewish religious school in Lakewood. In November 2022, antisemitic graffiti was reported at local Jewish schools, and a young Orthodox teenager was attacked with a knife.

This project – strongly supported by local law enforcement and elected leaders – is an appropriate use of taxpayer funding consistent with and supportive of the Office of Justice Programs’ mission to increase public safety and improve through innovative programs. This federal nexus is aligned with the purposes described in the Byrne Justice Assistance Grants (JAG) program, section 501 of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (34 U.S.C. § 10152).

I certify that neither I nor my immediate family has any financial interest in this project.

Thank you in advance for your careful consideration of my request for assistance for the *Lakewood Shomrim Radio Communication Enhancement Project*. I appreciate the Committee’s due consideration of the proposal.

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
Member of Congress