

Good afternoon Director Keith, Vice Chair Sullivan and distinguished Commissioners. My name is Jeffrey Ballabon. I have been affiliated with a number of policy institutes and think tanks and, together with Dr. Bruce Abramson, recently founded the American Restoration Institute, dedicated to American Exceptionalism and the restoration of foundational American values. I am a graduate of Yeshiva University, the Ner Israel Rabbinical College, and Yale Law School. I'm a former US Senate counsel and a former Senior Vice President of CBS News. I have a diverse background in law, policy, and communications, but will highlight a few examples of relevant experience in addressing this distinguished Commission: I worked with Attorney General Reno's office on behalf of the victims of the Oklahoma City bombing, and was senior management of a company providing training and education to law enforcement and emergency first responders nationally. I have represented American victims of terror in Washington and, in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, I was designated by Attorney General Ashcroft to be the point of contact between the federal government and the American Jewish community in the event of credible threats against Jewish targets.

I am a father and grandfather of American Jews and a son and grandson of European Holocaust victims and survivors. I am deeply concerned by the renewed mainstreaming of classic anti-Jewish conspiracy theories and have dedicated a good portion of the last several years focused on the alarming rise of antisemitism in America. Compound that with broad assaults on the integrity of law enforcement and current attempts to weaken police culture and funding, and we are at the most dangerous moment for Jews in this country – and arguably for the country as a whole - in living memory.

Last year, a multi-ethnic group of well-known organizations held a conference dedicated to combating Hate in America. It focused on racism against people of color, anti-Immigrant sentiment, Islamophobia, and homophobia, but conspicuously excluded antisemitism. When asked why, one of the organizers explained, "Because Jews aren't a minority." When it was pointed out that not only are Jews a minority, but according to FBI statistics, the minority most targeted for hate crimes<sup>1</sup> the dismissive response was, "Yes, but Jews get along with the police."

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<sup>1</sup><https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2018/topic-pages/victims> (See also, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/17/nyregion/hasidic-jewish-attacks.html>; <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/fbi-jews-subject-to-60-of-religiously-motivated-hate-crimes->

Painfully, that argument was made by someone in leadership at a major American Jewish organization.

I am here to talk about two points, both perfectly illustrated by that story, and to make two related recommendations.

The first point is that Jews, and particularly Orthodox Jews, have worked diligently to develop overall excellent relationships with local law enforcement. We are not just differentiated by our ethnicity; we live in close interaction with many other communities while leading a unique lifestyle synched to a unique calendar with daily practices and lifecycle events that are not familiar to outsiders - including many non-Orthodox Jews. Instead of these differences creating barriers, we've found that welcoming law enforcement, helping them learn about our culture, and being genuinely interested in understanding theirs has become what might be seen as a model for best practices. It turns out that law enforcement also is a unique culture that exists in close interaction with many others and is not well understood by outsiders.

Of course, there will be moments of friction and frustration, but Orthodox Jews overwhelmingly perceive law enforcement as the good guys. We are grateful to them, in part, perhaps, because we so vitally need their protection. I think local law enforcement also perceive us as overwhelmingly supportive and grateful. While efforts were made before, this concerted focus on building the relationship ratcheted up in the aftermath of the deadly 1991 Crown Heights riots, where Orthodox Jews absorbed a horrifying amount of violence. Law enforcement was not as helpful as they could have been. A major part of the problem was the Mayor's office, but some in the community realized that building mutual relationships and education with police at the community level would change that dynamic, and it has. Simultaneously, our community, which is keenly aware of the abuses Jews have suffered from authorities in other countries, goes out of its way to teach our children gratitude to the police here. Is it a model that can be adapted to other communities? Perhaps some aspects, and there are a number of individuals who would be willing

to help. Either way, it's a successful model not widely known, but worthy of comprehensive study.

The second point is that Jews generally, and most prominently Orthodox Jews, because we are so visible (we frequent synagogue multiple times daily, our clothing mark us as we walk down the street, etc.) are under increasing harassment and violent attack. And, while we are confident law enforcement would be prepared to work with us to help, there remains too much confusion and lack of reliable data about the nature of the threat and what constitutes imminent danger. One of the first acts of Islamist terror in the United States - the deadly shooting of a van carrying Orthodox teenagers on the Brooklyn Bridge – would not even have been acknowledged as either an antisemitic attack or a crime of terrorism by federal or state law enforcement but for the relentless struggle of a Chasidic woman - a murdered boy's mother – who dedicated years of her life to fighting and educating the system. The attack was finally reclassified seven years later, just 3 days before 9/11.

Today, we have rising antisemitism and violence again, from spontaneous street attacks to meticulously planned mass murders. And we have a complex set of political narratives that deny antisemitism where it exists, claim it exists where it doesn't, and create endless distortions and justifications that generally amount to blaming the victims, especially when they are Orthodox. However, we also have two resources that we lacked even ten years ago, but which have not yet been deployed. I think it is necessary to deploy them now:

First, we now have a widely accepted definition of what constitutes antisemitism. That definition has been ratified by the United States and applied to federal law by both President Obama and President Trump; it is accepted by Israel, by the United Nations, and by dozens of countries.

Second, we now have technology capable of tracking sentiment data - beliefs, trends, and ideas - and their linkage to violence against Jews. My colleagues and I are working on what is essentially an epidemiological model to map antisemitism - because the transmission of antisemitism bears astonishing resemblance to disease. It passes from person to person within a community or across communities – there is silent asymptomatic spread; there are super-spreaders and co-infections; and there are clusters and nodes of infection which move across borders and oceans literally

within fractions of a second thanks to social media. And it is deadly dangerous, not only to Jews but to the host societies it infects. We now have the capacity to track the spread of various strains, mutations, and metastases, identify and quantify risk factors, ameliorating factors, possible prophylactic measures, etc., and to do it in real-time, on scales from local to global, with hourly updates, and with completely privacy compliant technology.

Rather than view Hate Crimes solely from the existing perspective as a tool for prosecution and punishment, I propose that such data can be used to assist policymakers and law enforcement with preemption - with protection and prevention. We will have an epidemiological map. We will better understand the threat of antisemitism before it turns deadly. We will know who is vulnerable and when and where to deploy resources.

Yes, Jews do tend to get along with the police, thanks to goodwill and hard work by both sides, but that does not mean we are not dangerously at risk and increasingly so. Let's give law enforcement the tools to help deal with anti-Jewish violence. And perhaps, if this approach is executed successfully, it can be adapted to help law enforcement deal with other forms of violent hate.

Thank you.