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Wednesday, April 22, 2026

Honorable Mayor Brandon Johnson,

We write on behalf of the Decalogue Society of Lawyers (the nation's oldest Jewish bar association, founded in Chicago in 1934) to urge the immediate creation of an effective and empowered City task force dedicated to combating antisemitism. Recent data and events make clear that Chicago's Jewish residents face a mounting—and real—threat. The Chicago Commission on Human Relations found that *anti-Jewish hate crimes rose 58% from 2023 to 2024*, even as overall hate crimes in the city declined. This is not a generalized public safety problem. It is a specific and worsening threat to one community.

In 2024, Jews (comprising approximately 3% of Chicago's population) suffered more than *one-third* of all reported hate crimes. These horrific and hate-fueled attacks were intended to physically injure Jews and wound the emotional well-being of Chicago's Jewish residents generally. *No* community should be made to feel vulnerable and unsafe.

As you know, among many other brazen and horrific acts of violence, harassment, threats, and intimidation, one Chicago worshipper was shot and seriously wounded last October on the way to synagogue—simply for being identifiably Jewish. “Jewish people in the city need to not feel like they have a target on their back,” survivor Etan Bleichman pleaded. More recently, this past March, Anshe Sholom B’nai Israel Congregation in our Lakeview neighborhood received a bomb threat. Yet despite these alarming trends, Jewish communities in Chicago feel, validly, that the City's response has been insufficient.

At a March press conference, representatives of Chicago's leading Jewish organizations – including the Anti-Defamation League, Chicago Sinai Congregation, and local elected officials – unanimously demanded the formation of a formal antisemitism task force. They have even submitted to your office a detailed proposal for such a task force, as outlined in last year's CCHR report. Rabbi Amanda Greene emphasized the need to “establish the task force your commission recommended, name a leader accountable for this work, set timelines, [and] make progress public.” Alderperson Debra Silverstein echoed this, noting that the Commission on Human Relations “issued recommendations on how to curb this disturbing trend, but no action has been taken by City Hall.” In our view, it is indisputable and a priority for the City to enact and execute prompt action to affirm the safety of Chicago's Jews, who are proud, contributing, integral members of this great, diverse City.

You have recognized there is a problem. The next step should be implementation. The Decalogue Society stands ready to participate in such an effort. With hundreds of attorneys among our members, we can offer substantial *pro bono* expertise. For example, our lawyers can assist in drafting ordinances or policies, reviewing proposed legislation, and crafting educational materials. Further, our members could help develop legally sound training modules for City personnel and school staff on recognizing and responding to anti-Jewish bias – an idea endorsed by Ald. Silverstein, who has called for “mandatory anti-Jewish bias training for city employees, for teachers of our children, [and] for the police department.” We are prepared to coordinate with human resources and law enforcement to design these

programs. As always, our group remains committed to provide service and assistance—for the greater good of society, but also to advocate for our own community.

The case for immediate and tangible action is underscored by disturbing global developments. Foreign antisemitic violence reverberates here at home. On March 9, 2026, terrorists detonated a bomb outside a historic synagogue in Liège, Belgium. In the following days, the same extremist cell targeted the Dutch Jewish community: explosions rocked a synagogue in Rotterdam and a Jewish school in Amsterdam. On March 11<sup>th</sup>, close to home in suburban Detroit, an armed attacker rammed a truck into a temple where more than 120 preschool children were in attendance. Fortunately, security guards thwarted that domestic terrorist from committing an unimaginable atrocity. (Of note, a Chaldean club across the street offered respite, comfort, solace, and material support to that victimized Temple Israel community—a glowing example and reminder of how diverse communities can and should support each other).

On that same day, in Canada, gunshots were fired into two Toronto-area synagogues. These incidents – many linked to Iran-backed extremist propaganda – confirm that anti-Jewish terror is intensifying globally. Chicago, a major world city, cannot ignore these trends that have encroached already into our community.

Given the stakes, we respectfully call upon your leadership to establish, without further delay, the proposed antisemitism task force. We also urge you to publicly endorse the task force’s mission, and to assign an accountable senior official to oversee its work in a transparent and coherent process. The City should adopt the unanimous recommendations of the Human Relations Commission of last year, which include not only the Task Force, but also enhanced hate-crime reporting, outreach to Jewish institutions, and strengthened inter-agency coordination. These measures, along with robust training for all public servants, are common-sense steps to prevent hate from taking root in our city again, a goal we are confident that you and your administration support. Now is the time to transform such support into meaningful action and stewardship.

Towards these goals, the Decalogue Society of Lawyers offers its full partnership. We ask that your office coordinate with us in assembling the task force membership and determining its mandate. Our members – who live and work in communities across Chicago – are eager to lend their perspectives on lived experiences, policies, and law. Together, we can ensure that Chicago’s response to antisemitism is swift, visible, and effective. Our City’s reputation and its citizens’ safety depend on it.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We stand ready to assist in any way possible. We would appreciate a response as to your proposed actions within the next week. We look forward to hearing back from you

Respectfully,

Alexander D. Marks  
President

David Fish  
On Behalf of the Decalogue Committee Against Antisemitism and Hate

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