



## **Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council Praises Passage of Protecting Religiously Affiliated Institutions Act**

December 11, 2017 – New York – The Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council praises the passage of the Protecting Religiously Affiliated Institutions Act of 2017 (H.R. 1730) by the U.S. House of Representatives. The bill, adopted by a vote of 402-2, would expand coverage of federal hate crimes laws protecting houses of worship to include religiously affiliated institutions, and would send a signal of no tolerance for hate crimes against people of faith.

“Crimes against religious institutions are intended to create an atmosphere of fear that deters community members from attending worship services and social involvement. These hate crimes pose a danger to the religious freedom and security of all Americans,” said Stanley Bergman, Co-Chair of the Council.

Co-Chair Farooq Kathwari added, “We look forward to the Senate also adopting this bill on a bipartisan basis as now is the time to take action against hate crimes in this country.”

Hate crimes are on the rise. The recent FBI *Hate Crimes Statistics* report shows an increase of 4.6 percent in hate crimes incidents in 2016 compared to 2015. Anti-Jewish incidents remain the majority of religious-based hate crimes, while anti-Muslim incidents rose nearly 20 percent over 2015. These attacks infringe on the free exercise of religion protected by our Constitution.

The bill amends P.L. 104-155, the Church Arson Prevention Act of 1996, expanding it to include religiously-affiliated institutions, such as schools and community centers, in addition to houses of worship already under the scope of its protections. The bill also amends the statute to encompass threats against, as well as acts that result in damage or destruction to, religious real property. Further, it enhances the penalty for intentional damage to religious real property from the current one year (misdemeanor) to three years (unless there is bodily injury to a person, in which case the penalty is higher).

The Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council brings together 44 civil society, religious, and business leaders from across the United States to advocate for domestic policy issues of common concern to the American Jewish and American Muslim communities. Reversing the recent rise in hate crimes, and promoting the place of religious minorities in American society are the Council’s top priorities. The American Jewish Committee (AJC) and the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) are its co-conveners.