Jewish Federations of North America

September 10, 2026

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Westerman and Ranking Member Huffman:

On behalf of Jewish Federations of North America, representing 141 Jewish Federations and 300 Network Communities across the country, as well as our Center on Aging, Trauma, and Holocaust Survivor Care, we write in support of the Fort Ontario Holocaust Refugee Shelter National Historical Park Establishment Act (H.R. 1031), as the fort holds a unique place in American Jewish history.

During World War II, the Fort Ontario Emergency Refugee Shelter in Oswego, New York, provided refuge to 982 individuals from 18 countries fleeing Nazi persecution. As the only Jewish refugee shelter established in the United States during the war, Fort Ontario tells an important story about the Holocaust, the American refugee experience, and the Oswego community that welcomed them.

H.R. 1031 pays tribute to this history, solidifying the fort's place within the National Park System, ensuring that the history of the refugees who lived at Fort Ontario is preserved for future generations. At a time when firsthand witnesses to the Holocaust are becoming fewer, preserving the places and

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The Max M. Fisher Headquarters

25 Broadway, Suite 1700
New York, NY 10004-1010

Public Affairs Headquarters

1275 Pennsylvania Avenue NW,
9th Floor
Washington, DC 20004

Israel and Overseas Headquarters

1 Ibn Gvirol Street. P.O. Box 7171, Jerusalem 91071
Israel

Phone 212-284-6500
JewishFederations.org

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stories that document this history is increasingly important. Fort Ontario offers future generations a tangible connection to the experiences of Holocaust refugees who found safety on American soil, highlighting the consequences of persecution and the importance of providing refuge to those fleeing it.

Jewish Federations of North America is proud to support H.R. 1031 and thanks Representatives Claudia Tenney and Tom Suozzi for their leadership in preserving this important chapter of American and Jewish history. We respectfully urge the Committee on Natural Resources to advance this legislation and look forward to working with the Congress to ensure that the story of Fort Ontario and the refugees who found safety there is remembered for generations to come.

Sincerely,

The Honorable Eric D. Fingerhut

President and CEO

Jewish Federations of North America