

# Pennsylvania Program Distributes Security Grants to Jewish Day Schools

Jarrad Saffren | Senior Editor

Federation and day school leaders today talk a lot about the “Jewish tax,” or the extra costs associated with securing Jewish spaces.

One recent Teach Coalition study found that security costs for day schools have risen 124% since Oct. 7, 2023. The American Jewish Committee wants the federal government to increase funding for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program to \$1 billion. Pennsylvania expanded funding for its state-level Nonprofit Security Grant Program to over \$10 million in 2024.

But the state also has an initiative to help nonpublic schools specifically: the Targeted School Safety Grants for Nonpublic Schools program. It’s been around since 2023, and it’s been cited by Teach PA, a statewide advocacy organization for day schools, as a key pillar of its Harrisburg agenda. The advocacy organization wants to increase funding for the program from \$20.7 million to \$30 million and raise the maximum grant from \$75,000 to \$125,000.

The 2026 recipients include 14 of the 34 day schools across the state, according to Jenny Sved, the executive director of Teach PA. Eight of those 14 — Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy, Abrams Hebrew Academy, I.S. Kosloff Torah Academy High School for Girls, Mesivta High School of Greater Philadelphia, Torah Academy of Greater Philadelphia, Cheder Chabad of Philadelphia, Politz Hebrew Academy and Yeshiva Ketana of Philadelphia — are in the Philadelphia area.

Seven of those eight got either the \$75,000 maximum or close to it. Barrack received a grant worth \$23,864.

Grant money from this program can



Teach PA's Mission to Harrisburg in April

go toward security or mental health needs, according to pa.gov. In total, 405 institutions and organizations applied for funding, and 353 were awarded grants.

The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, which distributes the money, lists the project start date as July 1, 2026. Funding must be used within a 24-month period. Applications opened on Feb. 2.

Jewish day schools can and often do apply for and receive grants from the state’s Nonprofit Security Grant Program. But in that initiative, they are competing with synagogues, churches and other nonprofit organizations. Sved has explained why nonpublic schools need their own program to *Philadelphia Jewish Exponent* before.

“A day school that has students in it all day long is different from a synagogue that might have a few members in and out throughout the day, and maybe a couple of clergy members,” she said in a May story about Teach PA’s Mission to Harrisburg.

She expanded on the point in an interview about this year’s grants.

“With a school, you have tons of children in and out. You have parents in and out, carpools. Schools tend to be more vulnerable and also at this point targeted,” she said. “They’re also probably known to be easy targets, unfortunately.”

A recent Teach PA survey found that, among seven day schools that responded, average security costs exceeded \$200,000, a 78% increase since Oct. 7, 2023, when they were \$77,000.

Teach Coalition, the parent organization of Teach PA, recently conducted research that discovered that 78% of day schools in New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey were either charging security fees or raising tuition due to security costs. That’s about a 50% increase since Oct. 7.

Those costs should be covered, according to Sved.

“I think it’s the state’s responsibility to keep all of Pennsylvania’s children safe, regardless of where they go to school,” she said. “Our children shouldn’t have to worry when they go to school.”

The executive director was clear



Rabbi Ira Budow

that it’s not solely Pennsylvania’s responsibility to cover these costs. Some combination of state and federal dollars can lower the “Jewish tax.”

“Between state and federal funds, not necessarily just this program,” she said.

Abrams Hebrew Academy, based in Yardley, spends close to \$100,000 per year, or between \$70 and \$80 an hour, on security, according to Rabbi Ira Budow, Abrams’ head of school.

Abrams received a grant worth \$74,460 from the Nonpublic Schools program, but only about \$25,000 is earmarked for security, per Budow. The rest will be allotted for mental health needs.

“Every penny we get for security is being used for security, and we still probably come up short. We also applied for a federal grant for security,” Budow said.

The rabbi added that he’s grateful to the state for the help. It’s just difficult to find enough support.

“Everybody’s using the money to the max,” he said. ■

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Courtesy of Abrams Hebrew Academy