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Legislature Passes “Non-Profit Homeland Security Preparedness Study Act” To Help Cultural, Educational And Religious Institutions Combat Terrorism

Albany, NY (July 1, 2008) – The “Non-Profit Homeland Security Preparedness Study Act,” sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos (R-Nassau) and Assemblyman Rory Lancman (D-Queens), unanimously passed both houses of the legislature, and will now be sent to Governor David Patterson for his signature.

The act directs the state Office of Homeland Security to analyze the security needs of non-profit institutions which face increased risk of terrorist attack and effectiveness of the existing programs in helping such institutions defend against those threats. The act also requires OHS to report back to the legislature by the end of this year on the feasibility of establishing a state non-profit homeland security grant program parallel to the existing inadequate and sporadic federal program, in order to provide direct support to non-profits to defend against terrorism. The existing federal program inexplicably didn't function at all in 2006, and in 2007 awarded non-profit institutions in New York a measly \$3.3 million statewide in grants to 43 institutions (fewer than half of those who applied for grants).

"New York's non-profit cultural, religious and educational institutions selflessly serve the needs of millions of New Yorkers, and it is fundamentally unfair for these institutions to

spend their scarce resources shouldering the entire burden of defending themselves against the increased threat of terrorism when all of us as New Yorkers benefit from the services they provide," said Lancman. "New York must step up to the plate to offer assistance to the non-profit institutions who contribute so much to our state, and this legislation lays the groundwork for establishing such a program," concluded Lancman.

[Skelos Statement]

"This threat is neither theoretical nor exaggerated. We applaud your efforts to secure at risk nonprofit sites. We appreciate the leadership demonstrated by Sen. Skelos and Assemblyman Lancman and their efforts to protect at-risk nonprofits," said David Pollock Associate Executive Director Jewish Community Relations of New York, Inc.

"Organizations like Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc. face increasing security costs every year. This bill, introduced by Assemblyman Rory Lancman and Majority Leader Dean Skelos, would provide non-profit organizations with assistance in bearing the burden of the increased threat of terrorism in New York State and comes at a critical time," said Melissa Thornton, Chief Government Relations Officer of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.

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