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April 8, 2019

Senator Bob Wieckowski  
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee 2  
State Capitol, Room 4085  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chair Wieckowski:

On behalf of the Jewish Public Affairs Committee of California (JPAC), we are writing in support of the Legislative Jewish Caucus' April 4th written request for \$35 million for one-time capital outlay to help fund the rebuilding of Jewish summer camps in Los Angeles County that were destroyed by the Woolsey Fire, and one camp destroyed in the 2017 Tubbs Fire. The camps are as follows: Camp Hess Kramer and Gindling Hilltop operated by the Wilshire Boulevard Temple, the Shalom Institute/Camp JCA Shalom and Conference Center on Mulholland Highway, and Camp Newman in Santa Rosa.

JPAC is the largest single-state coalition of Jewish organizations in the nation, representing Jewish communities and nonprofit organizations throughout California. Our membership is comprised of Jewish Federations, Jewish Community Relations Councils, Jewish Family Service agencies, and many other Jewish community organizations, and we advocate on behalf of broader community interests in California.

As you know, the Woolsey Fire was one of the most destructive wildfires in California history. The fire ignited on November 8, 2018 and burned 96,949 acres. It destroyed 1,643 structures, killed three people, and prompted the evacuation of more than 295,000 people. On November 9, 2018, the Woolsey Fire, driven and intensified by powerful winds, roared through this 187-acre property at the base of Yerba Buena Road. The blaze destroyed 90% of the camp structures, 56 buildings in all, including homes and living quarters of year-round staff. What was not ravaged by heat and flames on November 9 was soon devastated by mudslides and rivers of debris flowing down the barren hillsides in the wet months that followed.

Since 1952, Wilshire Boulevard Temple Camps (Camp Hess Kramer and Gindling Hilltop Camp) have played a vital role in the youth community of Southern California. In the 67 years since, the camps have provided a safe, bucolic space for children, families, teens and adults from within the Jewish community as well as the community at large to experience the unique setting of coastal California. During the summer, the camps provide an exciting, dynamic environment where campers and staff become part of a community, a

place where everyone is equal and included, supported and cared for, connected and challenged – giving them summers and friendships they will never forget and discovering their best selves. Throughout the other months of the year, the camps and conference center are used extensively by Los Angeles and Ventura County public schools, nonprofit veterans' organizations, local environmental groups, and many more. These varied groups use the site for educational, religious (both Jewish and non-Jewish), social, and environmental programs and retreats.

We are asking for \$20 million to help rebuild Camps Hess Kramer and Gindling Hilltop, which is what is the expected funding gap after insurance payments and philanthropic fundraising. The Woolsey fire destroyed 95% of the Shalom Institute Camp's structures and program areas. As result of the fire, buildings and infrastructure (water tanks, septic systems, etc.) both above ground and in the ground, including roads and bridges, were severely damaged or destroyed.

Shalom Institute is a premier camp and retreat center for experiential and environmental education and Jewish overnight camping. More than 25,000 people year-round are served through its programs and services. Shalom Institute facilitates positive experiences grounded in Jewish values that foster community, cultivate leadership, inspire social action, nurture Jewish tradition and culture, and instill a responsibility for the environment. As an experiential education center serving all walks of life, Shalom Institute offers full-service retreats and educational programs to more than 80 schools and community organizations each year. Its program services include religious and day school retreats, family camps, holiday educational celebrations, leadership trainings, adult retreats, family fun days, service projects, and social justice programs. We are seeking \$10 million to help rebuild of the Shalom Institute Camp and Conference Center, which is what is needed after insurance payments and philanthropic fundraising.

Each of these facilities, Camp Hess Kramer, Gindling Hilltop and Shalom Institute, are critical resources for urban and inner-city communities and serve a wide variety of ethnicities and income levels. They have provided educational and cultural experiences as well as programing on a year-round basis. Their loss is a major blow to all communities in Los Angeles. Insurance and private fundraising will cover part of the cost of rebuilding, but not all of it, which is why we are seeking assistance from the state to help bridge the remaining gap in funds.

The Jewish community greatly appreciated the state's assistance in last year's budget to a venerable Northern California Jewish institution, Camp Newman, which was destroyed in the Tubbs Fire. The work to rebuild Camp Newman continues and we are requesting \$5 million to assist with the capital outlay needed to help it rebuild.

Thank you very much for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Lynn Bunim  
Chair



Julie Zeisler  
Executive Director

Cliff Berg  
Legislative Advocate