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March 14, 2014

Ms. Brona Simon
Executive Director
State Historic Preservation Officer
Massachusetts Historical Commission
The Massachusetts Archives Building
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, MA 02125

**Re: Application for Round 20 MPPF Funding
Vilna Shul, 18 Phillips Street, Boston, MA**

Dear Ms. Simon:

This letter is written in support of the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund matching grant application of \$100,000 for the Vilna Shul, Boston's Center for Jewish Culture, Inc. on Boston's Beacon Hill.

Despite Boston's rich Jewish history and many famous religious sites, The Vilna Shul is the last immigrant-era synagogue left in a city that once had more than fifty. Built in 1919, it represents the oldest Jewish building within the city limits whose entire history has been an exclusively "Jewish building" – there is no other structure of comparable Jewish historic importance. Although religious services at still held here, today the Vilna is a non-profit the cultural organization dedicated to preserving history by restoring the building and hosting events and programs related to Jewish history as well as those of other community groups.

This funding request is for the restoration of the fence and plaza in front of the building. Though the exterior of the building proper has been restored, ninety-five years of weather and use have taken their toll on the iron fence and the concrete surface of the plaza. The slab is cracked and leaking into the mechanical room and men's washroom below requiring repairs to the heating system. Engineering studies have pronounced the steel beams and joists supporting the slab as beyond salvage and the slab itself as needing replacement. The original wrought-iron fence is embellished with six pointed Stars of David; iron finials and points are rusting and florets have been breaking off. The full cost of the project is estimated at \$270,000. This matching grant is crucial to the completion of this important rehabilitation.

Thank you for considering the Vilna Shul, Boston's Center for Jewish Culture and their request for grant.

Sincerely,



Greg Galer
Executive Director