



**News Release**  
**For Immediate Release: 8.13.20**  
Contact: Lacey McNeil, [media@firstliberty.org](mailto:media@firstliberty.org)  
Direct: 972-941-4453

## **First Liberty Institute Urges Houston Officials to Protect Religious Liberty of Small Jewish Congregation**

*Houston's threat against small congregation would stop its members' religious worship and drive them from their neighborhood*

---

**Houston, TX**—First Liberty Institute sent a letter to Houston city officials urging them to permit a small Orthodox Jewish congregation, Heimish of Houston, to continue meeting in a Houston neighborhood home. The City has sought to enforce residential-use restrictive covenants against the small congregation despite many businesses operating in the neighborhood.

You can read the letter [here](#).

“Houston is a diverse city that should welcome this small Orthodox Jewish congregation and protect its members’ ability to worship freely,” said Justin Butterfield, Deputy General Counsel for First Liberty Institute. “Heimish of Houston is asking city officials to follow the law and allow its families to continue meeting for worship within walking distance of their homes as prescribed by their faith. We are hopeful that city officials will recognize the religious freedom rights of this community.”

Heimish of Houston has been meeting in a home near its congregants for two years. The members of Heimish of Houston are limited to holding religious gatherings in their communities because of their religious prohibition against driving on the Sabbath. Heimish of Houston is uniquely situated to be within feasible walking distance of its members, many of whom moved to their homes in the neighborhood specifically to be near Heimish of Houston.

While numerous businesses and houses of worship operate in the same neighborhoods as Heimish of Houston, including a hospice care facility, a rehab house, a Ghanaian church, a Paper Shoppe, a Samskriti cultural center, a hair braiding salon, and a butcher, the City of Houston is demanding that this small Orthodox Jewish congregation stop holding religious worship—effectively banning adherents to Heimish of Houston’s form of Orthodox Judaism from living in that community.

According to First Liberty, both state and federal law, including the federal Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA), the Texas Religious Freedom Restoration Act (TRFRA), the Texas Constitution, and the U.S. Constitution’s Free Exercise Clause protect this small Jewish congregation from unreasonable regulations that substantially burden their free exercise of their religion.

# # #

**About First Liberty Institute**

[First Liberty Institute](#) is the largest legal organization in the nation dedicated exclusively to defending religious freedom for all Americans.

To arrange an interview, contact Lacey McNiel at [media@firstliberty.org](mailto:media@firstliberty.org) or by calling 972-941-4453.