

Federal Lawsuit Filed Against Houston Officials for Targeting Small Orthodox Jewish Congregation

*Houston's threat against small congregation could drive them from their
neighborhood*

Houston, TX—First Liberty Institute filed a federal lawsuit against Houston city officials for seeking to prevent a small Orthodox Jewish congregation, Heimish of Houston, from continuing to meet 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 lawsuit [here](#).

“The City’s actions are illegal and unfair,” said Justin Butterfield, Deputy General Counsel for First Liberty Institute. “Hundreds of thousands of Americans meet every day in small groups for prayer meetings, Bible studies, book clubs, card games, and other gatherings. Why would Houston stop this small, Jewish congregation from legally doing likewise?”

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 the lawsuit filed today, 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.

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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 or by calling 972-941-4453.