Rabbi Greene's Opening Remarks

Thank you all for making time to be here tonight among a community of friends and dedicated community members.

I want to start with something small: a few weeks ago, I was having a conversation with one of my daughter's friends about our work at JFS. She has volunteered off and on with Kol and, while at my house for a sleepover, she asked me why people who come to this country legally to seek safety sometimes still get sent away. I didn't have a simple answer for her. I still don't. But I think that's exactly why we're gathered tonight – to sit with that reality and think about how we can build a pathway forward.

Over the past two weeks, the Supreme Court has issued a series of rulings that will reshape immigration law for years to come — decisions on Temporary Protected Status, on asylum access at the border, on the rights of green card holders returning from travel abroad, and, in a rare rebuke to the administration, a ruling upholding birthright citizenship under the Fourteenth Amendment. Whatever any of us feels about these decisions individually, they are not abstract. They touch people we know and care for — neighbors, coworkers, members of this very community, and many of the families JFSWM has walked alongside for 126 years.

Our tradition teaches *lo tonu* — do not wrong the stranger, for you know the heart of the stranger – v'atem yedatem et nefesh hager, having been strangers yourselves in the land of Egypt. That command appears more times in the Torah than any other. It isn't sentimental. It's structural — a demand that our laws and our institutions be built around the dignity of the person most likely to be overlooked. Tonight isn't about scoring points on a legal ruling. It's about understanding, clearly and honestly, what these decisions mean in practice, so that we can respond — as a community, and as an organization with a century-plus of practice in exactly this work — with knowledge instead of fear.

Let's begin. Tonight, we are going to hear from Lauren, JFS' staff attorney, specifically about the recent TPS decision and the legal implications for our community. We will then hear from James, one of our employment specialists about the impact on the employment sector. Then, we will hear from Frenaud, a member of our staff who is from Haiti, about how the Haitian community is doing in this moment and what the future may hold for them. And, you will hear from Sara, our Chief Operating Officer, about what JFS has done to prepare for this moment and how we are standing with our clients. Finally, I will come back and share some takeaways and next steps for community members.