

HB 606 Testimony
Ohio House of Representatives Finance Committee
June 18, 2024

Good morning, Chairman Edwards and esteemed members of the committee, my name is Eli Berne, and I am the Senior Manager of Government Relations and Engagement at the Jewish Federations of North America.

The Jewish Federations represent 146 Jewish communities across the country, including 7 Federations and 9 network communities here in Ohio. We are an organization that is dedicated to improving the lives of Jews in their communities across North America, and does so by combatting hate and pushing back against antisemitism wherever it rears its ugly head. I am here to testify in favor of HB. 606, which seeks to create a safe environment for *all* students, including the thousands of Jewish students attending Universities across Ohio.

Universities have a sacrosanct duty to foster a safe campus environment for their students, and yet, in the wake of the October 7th attacks, Jewish students have been harassed, intimidated, and made to feel unsafe, while perpetrators of this conduct often experience few repercussions or ramifications. According to a [Jewish Federations poll from November](#), in the months after October 7th, 70% of American Jews said they felt less safe than they did two months prior. This is even before the recent wave of encampments broke out in the spring, raising the temperature on college campuses and causing Jewish students to feel more targeted and isolated than ever before. [According to Hillel International](#), a leading Jewish campus organization that supports Jewish students, there have been 1,810 antisemitic incidents on college campuses in the US since October 7th, marking a 700% increase compared to the previous year.

Unfortunately, Ohio is not impervious to the pervasive and very real threats faced by Jewish students across the country. Students will return to school in a few months, and Jewish students need to know that their elected officials care about addressing the unbearable campus climate that they were forced to tolerate this school year.

HB. 606 would help foster a safer environment for *all* of Ohio's college students, including Jewish students, and will serve as a model for other states to effectively address antisemitism on campus in a tangible way. This bill will create a comprehensive taskforce on each college campus to combat antisemitism, islamophobia, and other forms of hatred. The inter-agency partnerships outlined in this bill between local, state, and campus law enforcement will strengthen security measures to protect students who are a part of minority groups that face threats of terror attack or hate crimes.

The provisions in this bill serve as a model to help address threats to safety that many Jewish students have unfortunately faced. It has become increasingly clear that universities need strong guidance to ensure that Jewish students remain safe on their campus, and HB. 606 outlines clearly how University officials can take a proactive approach to addressing antisemitism on their campuses. This bill ensures that Ohio's universities will be prepared to forcefully and effectively tackle antisemitic bias and misconduct.

Passage of the Campus Act will send a strong message that the state of Ohio unequivocally condemns hatred and antisemitism, and that Ohio's elected officials stand with Jewish students across the state. As

a representative of the Jewish Federations of North America, I urge you to pass this bill and take a stand against anti-Jewish hate and bigotry. Thank you.