

47th House District

Portions of Butler County, including
Hamilton and Fairfield, Ross
Township and portions of Fairfield,
Hanover and St. Clair townships

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Sara P. Carruthers Ohio State Representative

Committees

-Finance-
-Finance Subcommittee on Health &
Human Services-
-Transportation-
-Behavioral Health- Homeland Security-

Commissions/Councils/Boards

-Early Childhood Advisory Council-
-Ohio Children's Trust Fund-
-Ohio Arts Council-
-Ohio Holocaust & Genocide Memorial

Chairman Peterson, Vice chair Thomas, Ranking member Humphrey and members of the Government Oversight Committee. I stand in front of you today to address an unprecedented phenomenon that is plaguing our nation, Antisemitism. House Bill 544 will work to protect Jews and other marginalized groups from hate crimes.

Israel has been under attack since October of last year. For the better part of a year, we have seen a steady rise in physical and verbal attacks on Jewish students and individuals, destruction of property, antisemitic speech and displays. In the US, antisemitic incidents are at the highest levels in 40 years—and have more than doubled in the past ten.

House Bill 544 seeks to address one aspect of the rise in antisemitism and would prevent Ohio's buildings and bridges from being commandeered to spread antisemitic messages and other hateful rhetoric. The bill will prohibit unauthorized displays of symbols on bridges or highways and unauthorized projections of images onto buildings and will expand the offenses of aggravated trespass and ethnic intimidation.

Antisemitism takes many forms and exists in our daily lives, for example –

- School buildings or cemeteries defaced with swastikas.
- Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion.
- Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Jews.

Antisemitism in all its forms must be confronted and opposed, and threats of violence are always unacceptable.

Antisemitism has no place in Ohio, and radical protestors should not be permitted to commandeer Ohio's buildings and bridges to convey antisemitism and other hateful messages without consequence. This bill sends a message that we will protect all groups of people regardless of religious views. Everyone deserves to feel safe at school, work, and in their community.

Chairman Peterson and members of the Government oversight committee thank you for hearing my testimony on House Bill 544. I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.

