

December 10, 2024

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Humphrey, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Steve Glickstein. For over 20 years I have lived in Ohio, keeping to myself, raising my kids, going to work and occasionally attending synagogue. Never in my life could I imagine myself standing here before you urging you to adopt a definition of antisemitism.

I used to think hate is obvious to everyone. A 4-year-old can tell you when someone is being hateful. Yet, in today's world, as unfathomable as it may be, people cannot agree on what is hatred directed toward me, a Jew.

As a Jew, I am standing here before you urging you to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of antisemitism. This clear definition is foundational to addressing the ugly hatred all of us are witnessing in the World, in the United States, in Ohio and here in Columbus.

Without a clear definition, how can we reasonably expect state agency employees to avoid bias? House bill 618 provides the clarity needed to equip state agency employees with the anti-bias training needed to keep Jews safe.

Without a clear definition, how can we reasonably expect judicial and administrative proceedings to ensure claims of antisemitism are evaluated with the same rigor as other forms of discrimination? Uniformity strengthens legal protections for individuals and communities targeted by antisemitism.

Without a clear definition, how can we reasonably expect Jewish individual are not overlooked in broader anti-discrimination efforts? By aligning with broader anti-discrimination efforts House bill 618 ensures Ohio remains a leader in combating all forms of hatred.

Without a clear definition, how can we reasonably expect to find a balance preserving free speech while addressing harmful discriminatory behaviors. House Bill 618 provides that balance by explicitly stating that the use of this antisemitism definition does not infringe upon First Amendment rights or Ohio's constitutional protections.

Without a clear definition, how can we reasonably expect to support justice and equity for Jewish communities in Ohio? By acknowledging the unique nature of antisemitism and providing tools to combat it, this bill underscores Ohio's commitment to justice and equity for all communities. In a time of rising hate crimes, such measures are essential to ensuring safety and dignity for everyone.

By passing House Bill 618, the state of Ohio will send a powerful message that hate has no place in our communities.

I urge the Ohio legislature to support House Bill 618 and help foster a more inclusive and just society.

Respectfully submitted, Steve Glickstein