

Hello my Name is Jerah Pettibone and I'm writing in fierce opposition to HB 158, or one part of it. This testimony will sound similar to my testimony in opposition to SB 297 last week, because the IHRA definition of anti-semitism is a problem for personally as a Jew, no matter which bill it's contained in. This definition of anti-semitism being enshrined into law is scary to me, as a Jew.

So, my mom used to say a lot that "if you have 10 Jews in a room you have 11 opinions" Jewish culture has been full of opinions, creative thought and constructive debate, since the creation of the Palestinian Talmud in the 4th century. An entire book of scholarly opinions, still a pillar of the Jewish faith today.

The right to disagree, and to come to ones own conclusions are celebrated Jewish values.

My own Jewish opinion has been carefully formed. I grew up at the intersection of Judaism and Christianity, got a degree in cultural philosophy and Arabic, and spent time living and working in the Middle East. My grandfather was an airman in WWII and I continue to engage with people and current events in the region.

The fact is that MANY Jews don't agree with the actions of the state of Israel. Some don't even agree theologically that a Jewish state should exist. Does that make us anti-semitic? Do we hate ourselves? This accusation is absurd,

when Judaism has existed for 2400 years longer than Israel. Israel is a blip on the map of Judaism. A radical smear of blood on our religious history.

Hundreds of thousands diverse Jewish people all over the world have spoken out against the actions of the Israeli state. And although that is our responsibility both as Jews and American citizens, hundreds have already been arrested, injured, detained, prosecuted, lost jobs, got kicked out of school - harmed.

Which brings me to the very first example of anti-semitism provided in this bill,

Its says antisemitism is:

“Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical

ideology or an extremist view of religion.

HB 297 would cause even further harm to Jewish people and therefore commits anti-semitism just by its existence. It endangers Jewish people and everyone else who exercises their constitutional rights of free speech and religion.

It fuels the fire of real anti-semitism, and the smoke from that fire

clouds our ability to see anti-semitism where it really lies. According to this bill, every single person in this room is anti-semitic including all government officials, and the majority of American voters who - regardless of party affiliation support a ceasefire in Palestine.

This bill will punish me for practicing my religion, for practicing doykait - the diasporic concept of 'hereness' first

coined in Lithuania in 1897, before the creation of Israel, whereby we strengthen Jewish Communities through solidarity with the community in which we live.

As a Jew, an educator, a farmer, a public servant, a queer person born and raised in Ohio, I urge you to oppose this bill. The broadness and ambiguity of this bill will erode free speech in Ohio.

The author of the IHRA definition of anti-semitism intended it to be used for data collection and explicitly not be used for government policy and has spoken out about that extensively.

I know the big Jewish lobbying groups are pushing this definition very hard, and it may seem like all Jews agree with this, but

we do not. Please hear us and remove the IHRA definition of anti-semitism from HB 158.

Sincerely

Jerah Pettibone

Jewish Voice for Peace