

Testimony by Fred Miller in Support of S.B. 297

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Fred Miller, and I am here today as the proud son of Holocaust survivors Dr. Albert and Jane Miller and as a member of the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Cincinnati. I am also speaking on behalf of Cincinnati's Nancy & David Wolf Holocaust & Humanity Center (HHC), where my father's story is preserved and shared as a powerful reminder of the dangers of unchecked hatred and the vital need for action against bigotry.

My father, Dr. Albert Miller, was born in Berlin in 1922 and witnessed firsthand the rise of antisemitism in Germany. As a student, he saw his Jewish classmates leave school one by one as the Nazis consolidated power. He remained the last Jewish student in his school until it became impossible to stay. In 1937, at just 15 years old, he left Berlin to attend a boarding school in Switzerland.

Following Kristallnacht in 1938, my father's parents made the difficult decision to flee Germany, navigating a harrowing journey through Belgium, Holland, and England before immigrating to the United States. My mother, Julianne Bertha Goldberger, who was born in Vienna in 1925, escaped with her family to Prague in September 1938.

Reflecting on the Holocaust and the rise of Nazism, my father often said, "The Holocaust didn't start with bullets; it started with words." He understood that the hatred and violence of the Holocaust began with rhetoric—words designed to dehumanize, scapegoat, and isolate Jewish people. These words created a fertile ground for violence, culminating in the genocide of six million Jews.

This lesson is central to the work of HHC. Located inside Cincinnati's Union Terminal, where thousands of Holocaust survivors first arrived as refugees, HHC is the only stand-alone Holocaust museum and resource center in the state. HHC educates teachers, students, and the broader public about the Holocaust to empower them to recognize and reject the early warning signs of hate and prevent atrocities from happening again. This mission directly aligns with the goals of S.B. 297, which expands protections against ethnic intimidation and adopts the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism.

The IHRA definition is a critical tool for identifying antisemitism in its many forms, from overt violence to the insidious stereotypes and rhetoric that demonize and isolate Jews. By formally adopting this definition, Ohio will not only provide a clear framework for addressing antisemitism but also send a strong message that it stands firmly against all forms of hate.

My father's story, and the stories of so many others preserved at HHC, remind us of the consequences of inaction. My mother's story further underscores the importance of protecting and uplifting the narratives of those who fled persecution. Today, I ask you to honor their memories and the lessons they taught us by supporting S.B. 297. As my father believed, words matter. By expanding protections against ethnic intimidation and adopting a clear definition of antisemitism, you are taking meaningful action to ensure that the seeds of hatred do not take root in Ohio.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my family's story and speak in support of this critical legislation. I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

Respectfully,

Fred Miller

Member, Cincinnati Jewish Community Relations Council

Advocate, Nancy & David Wolf Holocaust & Humanity Center