

SB 297 Proponent Testimony
December 4, 2024

Honorable members of the Ohio State Judiciary Committee,

My name is Rena Harow. I am a sophomore at Columbus Torah Academy. I have lived in Columbus, Ohio my entire life, and have experienced the impact of antisemitic behaviors first hand. Many incidents that I have witnessed have been the recent pro-Nazi propaganda downtown, a thwarted plan from my school's security guard, Thomas Develin when he intended to commit a school shooting at Columbus Torah Academy, and so many more. To me, this is hitting too close to home. I am often terrified to walk the streets on Saturday, my Sabbath, in my Sabbath clothing, worried to be noticed for the wrong reasons. I've stopped wearing my Star of David necklace entirely and am often skeptical of all officers and security guards. Nobody, including the Jewish people, should be forced to live this way.

This is why Senate Bill 297 is crucial. By clearly defining antisemitism, it equips Ohio with the tools needed to identify and address bias effectively. Adopting the definition ensures that incidents motivated by hate can be investigated and prosecuted appropriately, sending a clear message that prejudice has no place in our state.

I believe this bill will not only protect the Jewish residents in Ohio, but will also affirm our collective commitment to equality.

Thank you for your consideration and for taking meaningful action to address this pressing issue.

Sincerely,

Rena Harow
Columbus Torah Academy