



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

My name is Boris Zilberman and I serve as the Director of Public Policy and Strategy for the CUFI Action Fund, the policy arm of Christians United for Israel – a 10 million strong organization, with over 400,000 members here in Ohio.

As you know, since Hamas's brutal October 7th massacre and kidnapping of innocents in Israel, antisemitism has reached fever pitch across the United States. Here in Ohio, grotesque instances of antisemitism occurred well before the conflict and in the wake of the October 7th Hamas invasion of Israel, the Jewish community has encountered hatred directed at them all too often – with a 289% increase in antisemitic incidents in 2023 alone [according](#) to the Anti-Defamation League.

CUFI works to ensure that Israel is not alone in peace time nor when faced with a multi-front war, and that Jewish people across the country, and right here in Ohio, are not alone in the age-old fight against Jew hatred.

This is why I am asking you to take a stand against antisemitism by ensuring that SB 297, legislation which expands the offense of ethnic intimidation to include the offense of riot and offers the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism for use as guidance when investigating anti-Jewish actions, is passed into law.

We have seen the Jewish community be on the receiving end of bomb threats, antisemitic protests and flyers, desecration of Jewish cemeteries, and intimidation and bullying on college campuses. And yet there are those that attempt to deny what is happening or why it is happening.

To be clear: we cannot defeat that which we are unwilling to define.

40 countries have adopted the IHRA definition, as have 37 states across our nation and the federal government. The definition enjoys widespread bipartisan support as evidenced by its use in successive US administrations.

This legislation does not deny anyone their right to free speech, no matter how repugnant we might find certain statements. College students can still rant and rave against Israel and the Jewish people — this is freedom of speech. But, if they commit acts of harassment, vandalism, or worse while exercising this freedom, this legislation will empower authorities to determine when antisemitic acts have been committed, with disciplinary action to follow.



It is past time for Ohio to join the moral majority and acknowledge the importance of the IHRA the definition as a tool for combating antisemitism by codifying it and ensuring that authorities have all the legal means at their disposal to ensure antisemitic actions do not go unchecked.

Thank you for considering this vital legislation.

Sincerely,

Boris Zilberman
Director of Public Policy and Strategy
CUFI Action Fund