

Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee

December 4, 2024

Written Testimony in Support of Adoption of IHRA Definition of Antisemitism in SB 297

ADL (the Anti-Defamation League) is pleased to submit these written comments in **support of adopting the IHRA Definition of Antisemitism in SB 297**. This bill will help position the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism as a critically important tool that government, educational authorities, and civil society institutions can use in order to identify and understand the complex ways in which antisemitism can manifest today.

As you may know, ADL is a leading anti-hate organization founded in 1913 with a mission to “stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all.” Today, ADL continues to fight all forms of antisemitism and bias, using innovation and partnerships to drive impact. A global leader in combating antisemitism, countering extremism and battling bigotry wherever and whenever it happens, ADL works to protect democracy and ensure a just and inclusive society for all.

The IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism is a non-legally binding reference point, or tool, that can provide critical guidance to government, educational authorities and civil society institutions to illustrate, and thus to help identify, contemporary examples of antisemitic expressions that not everyone may realize play on longstanding and deeply harmful anti-Jewish tropes or other forms of animus towards the Jewish religion or Jewish people. This is all the more important given the fact that antisemitism is both like and unlike other types of identity-based hate, and over centuries has consistently taken the form of a totalizing conspiracy theory, adaptable to a society’s fears and anxieties.

The need for measures like SB 297 could not be more urgent. ADL’s most recent Audit of Antisemitic Incidents tracked 8,873 antisemitic incidents across the country in 2023, which reflected a 140% increase over the year before and represented by far the highest number the agency has tracked since we began doing so in 1979. This report also showed a startling increase in reported antisemitic incidents here in Ohio, with 375 incidents reported in 2023 which is a 250% increase from 2022. In February, ADL issued its Top Line Findings of Antisemitic Attitudes in America. This survey of more than 4,000 individuals found that 24% of Americans believe six or more anti-Jewish tropes and more than 42% of Americans either have friends/family who dislike Jews (23.2%) or find it socially acceptable for a close family member to support Hamas (27.2%). The survey also found a significant percentage of Americans hold anti-Israel positions.

The impact of rising antisemitism on the Jewish community cannot be overstated. American Jews are living in increasing fear of violent attacks, of being targeted by conspiracy theories drawing on classic antisemitic tropes, and of being increasingly marginalized by those expressions of anti-Israel animus that can cross the line into antisemitism.

Against this backdrop, we urge Ohio to use all tools at its disposal to push back against these disturbing trends. ADL accordingly supports the use of IHRA's Definition of Antisemitism, including the eleven contemporary examples, as providing critically important guidance to help identify, understand and address antisemitic incidents so that we can work together to combat this oldest form of hatred.

We now urge the Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee to pass SB 297.

Sincerely,



Kelly Fishman
ADL Cleveland Regional Director
Serving Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia, & Western Pennsylvania