

Proponent Testimony Senate Bill 297
Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee December 4, 2024

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 297.

The rise of antisemitism across Columbus, Ohio, and our nation affects Jews everywhere. The sense of security that many in the Jewish community once felt has been eroded over the past year, particularly since October 7, 2023. At the end of September, the FBI released data showing reported single-bias anti-Jewish hate crime incidents rose to 1,832, a significant increase of 63 percent over 2022. It also is the highest number of incidents of anti-Jewish hate crimes ever recorded by the FBI since it began collecting data in 1991.

In Columbus, we've seen Jewish students attacked walking home at night, swastikas graffitied at homes, anonymous callers spewing hate at city council meetings, and most recently masked neo-Nazis marching through the Short North. The struggle to combat antisemitism cannot fall only on the shoulders of the Jewish Community. We need our allies, from community members to lawmakers, to help stomp out hate.

One way members of the Ohio General Assembly can do this is by passing SB 297. SB 297 would adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism, which includes modern day examples as well. By passing this bill, you send a clear message that Jew-hate, antisemitism, is unacceptable and provide statute to prosecute offenders. You also reaffirm the safety and security of the Jewish communities and Jewish students on campuses in Ohio.

I urge members of the committee to vote in favor of SB 297. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Andrea Britcher
Jewish Community Relations Council Co-Chair, JewishColumbus
Worthington, Ohio