



Testimony of  
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Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations  
Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing  
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Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Members of the Committee,

My name is William Daroff and I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, the recognized umbrella representing fifty national Jewish organizations that span the religious and political spectrum of American Jewry.

I speak this morning in support of Senate Bill 297.

I am a proud son of Ohio. I grew up in Shaker Heights, and my parents and a brother still live in Cuyahoga County. It is an honor to be back in the State House. I was a page in the Ohio House of Representatives in the mid-1980's for a younger back bencher named Bill Batchelder, and later was an intern in the State Senate for Gary Suhadolnik.

A few years later, when I had the honor of working for Governor George Voinovich, I had a front row seat in the office of one of the most righteous gentiles I have ever known. When he was a United States Senator, we worked together to write and pass his legislation, which created the Special Envoy for Combatting and Monitoring Antisemitism at the State Department. A post whose necessity was unfortunately foretold by Senator Voinovich, as the scourge of antisemitism metastasized around the world in the days since the Hamas terror attacks of October 7, 2023.

The dramatic rise of antisemitism here in the United States is well documented. In the year following the attacks, the ADL tracked more than 10,000 antisemitism incidents, which is an increase of more than 300% over the previous year. That number includes more than 150 incidents of physical assault, 1,200 incidents on US college campuses, and 3,000 incidents during anti-Israel rallies.

Just two weeks ago, neo-Nazis marched through this very city of Columbus, chanting antisemitic slogans and racist rhetoric. We commend Governor DeWine and other state and local officials for their quick condemnation of the event and for standing with the Jewish community.

This hatred needs urgent attention from lawmakers at every level. In order to properly identify and coordinate efforts to combat any issue, though, you must first define it. Creating a universal definition of antisemitism, the world's oldest hatred, which has taken every form imaginable, was no small feat. Through the tireless work of advocates and their allies in office, the International Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Definition of Antisemitism has been adopted by more than 40 countries, hundreds of municipalities, academic institutions, and nonprofits, and 37 of our states.

Ohio is included in this number through Governor DeWine's 2022 Executive Order. SB 297, however, adds to that executive order by including the IHRA definition's essential examples. The scope and utility of the IHRA definition lie in the examples it provides, which capture not only traditional anti-

Jewish hatred and Holocaust denial but also modern antisemitism that targets the State of Israel based on its Jewish foundations and character.

Ohio's current adoption of IHRA would be enhanced by the designation of certain antisemitic acts as such. The Jewish community is therefore grateful to Senator Terry and his cosponsors for their efforts in promoting SB 297.

Combat Antisemitism Movement recently released a bombshell report finding that US states that have not fully implemented the IHRA definition are more likely to have larger amounts of Jew-hatred on their university and college campuses. The data bears it out – the IHRA definition is key to educating about, identifying, and ultimately reducing antisemitism.

This bill buttresses and enhances Ohio's antisemitism policy and is therefore critical to ensuring that all Jews in this state are properly protected under the law. We therefore ask you to stand with us and vote to approve this important legislation. Thank you for the opportunity to address you.