

Written Only Testimony of Tyler M. Duvelius
Proponent of Senate Bill 297
December 4, 2024

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

I am submitting this written only proponent testimony in support of Senate Bill 297 as a private citizen who resides in Prairie Township in Franklin County. SB 297 defines antisemitism according to the definition set forth by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). It is my opinion that this bill would give a more complete and concrete definition to antisemitism and allow state agencies to properly address antisemitic acts. It is important to note that the IHRA definition has been the working definition for the state of Ohio through executive order since 2022¹. SB 297 represents an important step to codify this policy into law rather than allow it to be subject to the whims of political change.

Both the IHRA² and the U.S. Department of State³ define antisemitism as “a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”

It is no secret that antisemitism is on the rise in the United States⁴ at a time when we should be united in standing up to discriminatory acts committed against our Jewish brothers and sisters. The horrific terrorist attack perpetrated by Hamas on October 7, 2023, was rightly met by shock, sadness and disgust by most Ohioans. Unfortunately, and inexplicably, it has emboldened a vocal minority who have made their hateful opinions of the Jewish people undeniably clear.

I witnessed this antisemitism firsthand during my college years at The Ohio State University. As a member of Undergraduate Student Government, I worked to successfully push back against a misguided movement to get the University to Boycott, Divest, and/or Sanction (BDS) the State of Israel. Our usually poorly attended midweek meetings overflowed with raucous supporters of BDS. The rhetoric from the BDS supporters was so heated during one meeting that University police were present to ensure everyone’s safety. I was proud to take a stand against antisemitism that evening, but the memories of the antisemitic, vitriolic comments of BDS supporters has stayed

¹ <https://governor.ohio.gov/media/executive-orders/executive-order-2022-06d#:~:text=NOW%20THEREFORE%2C%20I%2C%20Mike%20DeWine,encourage%20all%20federal%20and%20local>

² <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>

³ <https://www.state.gov/defining-antisemitism/>

⁴ <https://www.adl.org/resources/press-release/us-antisemitic-incidents-skyrocketed-360-aftermath-attack-israel-according>

with me ever since. The experience has driven me to ensure that antisemitism never has the opportunity to take hold in Ohio.

In summary, SB 297 fairly labels what constitutes antisemitic language and creates a helpful tool for state agencies, organizations, universities and any other relevant stakeholder. In my view, this is a commonsense bill and should be strongly supported by all who wish to denounce hate.

I appreciate your attention to this written only proponent testimony in support of SB 297. I would be happy to further discuss my testimony in greater detail with any members of the committee at their convenience.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler M. Duvelius". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Tyler M. Duvelius
Prairie Township Resident
Franklin County, Ohio