

SB 297 Testimony
Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing
December 4, 2024

Good morning, Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Members of the Committee. My name is Eliana Goodman, and I am the Director of Public Policy for the Combat Antisemitism Movement (CAM).

CAM, founded in 2019, is a global coalition at the forefront of the battle against antisemitism. With partnerships encompassing over 850 interfaith organizations, influential decision makers, and a network of more than five million activists and 250 social media influencers, CAM leads a united front against Jew hatred. Our vision is to forge an unbreakable shield that safeguards Jewish communities and all those impacted by hatred, ensuring that antisemitism, in any form, is eradicated from our society. As a 21st-century advocacy leader, CAM has become a key voice, mobilizing its partners and grassroots followers through local, state, federal, and international programs, policies, and initiatives.

Antisemitism is the world's most enduring form of hatred, reinventing itself over the millennia. Unfortunately, antisemitism is not a relic of history, it remains a persistent and growing threat. Since October 7, 2023, when Hamas brutally and barbarically attacked Israel, our country has seen an explosion of antisemitic and anti-Israel activity, endangering the lives of Jewish students and the entire Jewish community. Over the past year, K-12 schools as well as college and university campuses have become hotbeds of antisemitic activity, as students, faculty, administrators, and staff have participated in anti-Israel demonstrations, lock-ins, and encampments. Jewish students and faculty were and continue to be harassed, physically harmed, intimidated, forced to be locked into buildings, and blocked from entering parts of their campuses.

Ohio has unfortunately not been immune to this trend, with reports of antisemitic incidents, marches, graffiti, and threats to synagogues, including a [recent](#) incident where a group of neo-Nazis paraded and carried flags with swastikas in Columbus, Ohio. To further illustrate the level of antisemitism in our country, our organization has recorded a 585% rise in weekly antisemitic incidents on college campuses in the United States through 2024. Additionally, CAM recently commissioned a [survey](#) that found that 3.5 million American Jews have personally encountered antisemitism since that horrific and horrid day on October 7th. This is absolutely unfathomable.

In order to investigate and combat antisemitism, one must understand and ultimately define what it is. A key tool in curbing this hatred is the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism, and its contemporary examples, the world's gold standard in fighting against all forms of antisemitism. This widely accepted and non-legally binding definition is an essential resource in identifying, tracking, and investigating antisemitic discrimination. As of November 1, 2024, 37 U.S. state governments have [adopted](#) this key definition, and so far, 13 have codified the definition into state law.

The IHRA definition and its contemporary examples are critical to use as antisemitism today often masks itself in language or behaviors that blur the lines between criticisms of policies and bigotry against Jewish identity. By explicitly including the IHRA definition and its examples, SB 297, equips educators, law enforcement, policymakers, educational institutions, and many others with a framework to identify and respond to antisemitic acts in Ohio. Ultimately, this important legislation will enhance Ohio's ability to combat antisemitism by providing clear guidance on what constitutes antisemitic behavior, ensuring that instances of hate can be adequately, properly, and effectively addressed.

Therefore, passage of SB 297 will demonstrate Ohio is taking a significant step toward ensuring the safety and dignity of its Jewish community while affirming its commitment to combatting hatred in all forms. As a representative of the Combat Antisemitism Movement, I thank you for bringing up SB 297 and I urge you to pass this bill and take a strong stand against anti-Jewish hate and bigotry. Thank you.