

StandWithUs

Supporting Israel & Fighting Antisemitism

December 4, 2024

Re: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 297

Dear Senator Judiciary Committee,

We write on behalf of StandWithUs, an international nonprofit educational organization that educates about Israel and combats antisemitism. We write in support of Senate Bill 297 and urge the Senate Judiciary Committee to pass this legislation designed to codify Governor Mike DeWine's executive order defining antisemitism using the International Holocaust Memorial Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism (IHRA) and illustrative examples.

On October 7, 2023, Hamas invaded Israel and committed the deadliest assault against the Jewish people since the end of the Holocaust. The massacre unleashed a tidal wave of antisemitism in the world, in the U.S., and even in Ohio. Among the many incidents, two Ohio State University students were [attacked](#) because they were Jewish, the Brooklyn Jewish cemetery was [defaced](#) with antisemitic graffiti, and in Liberty Township, cars were [vandalized](#) with swastikas. According to the Anti-Defamation League's annual report, the number of statewide antisemitic incidents quadrupled in 2023.

We have an antisemitism problem. The first step towards combating antisemitism is to define it. SB 297 fulfills that exact purpose, providing an objective definition in order to help state officials better identify and combat unlawful acts of antisemitism.

The IHRA definition provides 11 illustrative examples that help clarify what contemporary antisemitism entails and remains the only consensus-driven definition of antisemitism. Each adoption of IHRA helps standardize and consolidate the greater fight against antisemitism. Passing SB 297 would align Ohio with over 1,200 institutions worldwide that have adopted or endorsed the IHRA definition, including 40 countries, 37 U.S. states, Democrat and Republican presidential administrations, as well as organizations as vast and diverse as the Global Imams Council, Lufthansa Airlines, and the English Premier League. Ninety-five percent of all major American Jewish organizations have adopted the IHRA Definition because it expresses the lived experiences of the Jewish people.

SB 297 does not stifle anyone's free speech (including antisemitic speech) or one's right to criticize Israel, nor does it create a new law or protected class. This legislation simply defines antisemitism so that officials can close an equal protection deficit and better protect the Jewish community from unlawful acts of antisemitism.

The work of our organization focuses on education about matters related to antisemitism and engaging in both proactive and responsive efforts to combat it. We hope that you will let us know if there is any way in which our partnership would be beneficial to you in this regard.

Sincerely,

Roz Rothstein

Roz Rothstein
CEO StandWithUs

cc: Senator Nathan Manning
Senator Michele Reynolds
Senator Paula Hicks-Hudson
Senator Matt Dolan
Senator Theresa Gavarone
Senator Rob McColley
Senator Kent Smith
Senator Niraj Antani