

Good Morning, esteemed members of the committee. My name is Miriam Bird, and I am a student at the University of Cincinnati. I am a Jewish student of color with South Korean heritage, and I am here today to advocate for the importance of codifying the definition of antisemitism within our state government.

As someone who exists at the intersection of multiple identities, I have experienced a unique form of antisemitism that combines racism and anti-Jewish hatred. I have faced threats and hostility simply because of who I am—a Jewish woman of color. These experiences are painful and isolating, and they highlight the urgent need for clear, consistent language to define and address antisemitism.

I am deeply involved in the Jewish community, not only as a student leader and intern at the University of Cincinnati but also as a song leader for Friday night services at schools, camps, and organizations across Ohio. In every space I serve, I see the importance of creating safe environments where Jewish identity is respected and protected. Unfortunately, this is not always the reality. Without a codified definition of antisemitism, it becomes far too easy for harmful behaviors to be minimized or dismissed, leaving Jewish students, particularly those like me who experience additional layers of discrimination, vulnerable and unsupported.

Adopting the definition of antisemitism outlined by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) would provide essential clarity. It would empower educators, administrators, and policymakers to recognize when legitimate criticism veers into harmful discrimination. It would ensure that Jewish students of all backgrounds, including Jews of Color, are protected from hate and prejudice.

This is not about limiting free speech—it is about ensuring that hate speech is recognized and addressed. By codifying this definition, the state will send a powerful message that antisemitism in any form will not be tolerated, and that all students, regardless of their background, deserve to feel safe and valued.

In a time when antisemitism is on the rise, this action is not only necessary—it is urgent. I urge you to take this critical step to protect Jewish students like me and to uphold the values of justice and equality that define our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Miriam Bird

Student, University of Cincinnati