

Dear members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Rana Elhag and I was born and raised in Toledo, Ohio. I am an educator in the community and I, as I'm sure you do as well, have a personal attachment to the rights and freedoms afforded to me as an American. **I strongly oppose SB297** because it undermines the principle of free speech and sets a dangerous precedent down a slippery slope of what rights may be restricted or attacked next.

The second amendment allows political speech, even that which is controversial or deeply unpopular. The IHRA definition of antisemitism includes scenarios that conflate criticism of zionism, a political ideology, with antisemitism. I urge you to take the principled stance of supporting free speech by rejecting attempts to stifle it through this bill.

SB297 also gives organizations the ability to penalize individuals and groups based on a subjective and broad interpretation of antisemitism. If this bill goes into effect, individuals who are involved in political activism that is seen as outside the scope of acceptability by proponents of Israel will be threatened and unjustifiably expelled from their educational institutions or workplaces as a result. That is astonishing, and would rightly be criticized as draconian and authoritarian if it happened in another part of the world. This legislation is extremely dangerous and puts vulnerable members of our community at risk of being targeted for legitimate political activism that should be protected at all costs.

Democracy thrives in an environment where good faith discourse is allowed, and if SB297 is passed, it will mean that our state is contributing to the steady chipping away of our democratic principles in a reactionary and deeply concerning manner. I know that you don't want to be a part of that, and I urge you to take a stand against it.

Sincerely,
Rana Elhag