

December 9, 2024

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB297, Define antisemitism; expand offense of ethnic intimidation. Antisemitism is discrimination, targeting, violence and dehumanizing stereotype directed at Jew because they are Jewish. It is a serious offense, and I unequivocally stand against it in any form.

The major problem with SB297 is the use of the IHRA definition of antisemitism that includes examples that conflate criticism of the state of Israel with antisemitism. This law would have chilling effects on our constitutionally protected freedom of speech. The bill's expansion of "ethnic intimidation" criminalizes our right to peaceful protest.

The Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism states: Political speech does not have to be measured, proportional, tempered, or reasonable to be protected under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights and other human rights instruments. Criticism that some may see as excessive or contentious, or as reflecting a "double standard," is not, in and of itself, antisemitic. In general, the line between antisemitic and non-antisemitic speech is different from the line between unreasonable and reasonable speech. (1)

The Jewish Voice for Peace document, On Antisemitism, Anti-Zionism and Dangerous Conflations states: Conflating antisemitism with opposition to the Israeli government's policies or ideology is especially dangerous right now. Supporters of Palestinian rights are losing their jobs, being doxxed and harassed online, being attacked physically, and facing congressional censure for trying to save lives. (2)

The Senate Judiciary Committee should reject this unconstitutional legislation.

Connie Hammond
Columbus, Ohio

1. Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism. [Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism](#)
2. On Antisemitism, Anti-Zionism and Dangerous Conflations. [On Antisemitism, Anti-Zionism and Dangerous Conflations - JVP](#)