



**Opponent Testimony for Senate Bill 297**  
**OPAWL – Building AAPI Feminist Leadership**  
**Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee**  
**December 10, 2024**

Chairman Manning, Vice Chairwoman Reynolds, Ranking Member Senator Hicks-Hudson, and Members of the Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for considering our testimony today. We are Jona Hilario and Tessa Xuan, Co-Directors of OPAWL. OPAWL is a statewide grassroots community of Asian, Asian American, and Pacific Islander women and non-binary people in Ohio. Our organization is a multi-ethnic, multi-generational community and we represent the diverse diaspora from Asia and the Pacific Islands.

We oppose this proposed legislation as it threatens freedom of speech, suppresses dissent, and criminalizes political discourse. We condemn all forms of bigotry and oppression, including antisemitic bigotry against Jewish people. However, rather than addressing the real problem of antisemitism, this bill instead conflates criticism of the Israeli government and its actions with antisemitism, then goes further to criminalize it with harsh penalties, undermining First Amendment protections. Equating valid criticisms of the Israeli state with antisemitism does not help keep Jewish people safe and distracts us from the work of dismantling actual antisemitism. In particular the idea that it is antisemitic to claim that the state of Israel is a racist endeavor and also that you cannot apply “double standards” to Israel not demanded of other nations which is incredibly vague. Many activists and scholars (including Jewish activists and scholars) have argued over the years that Israel is an apartheid state that is committing genocide. Would this bill make it illegal to criticize Israel for the thousands of Palestinian children that were maimed and killed by bombs dropped by Israel?



As an organization that represents many Ohioans who have been directly impacted by the forces of colonialism and imperialism, we urge you to protect the right to legitimate political speech, including the right to freely protest atrocities against the Palestinian people without fear of reprisal from the state. We would oppose any legislation that designates unique protections for any state to be shielded from criticism through criminal and legal enforcement. As an organization we have been concerned and have spoken publicly about dangerous Anti-China rhetoric that endangers the Asian American community in Ohio. However we would never support the criminalization of criticisms and protests against China or the Chinese government.

OPAWL asks members of this committee to reject this proposed bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Jona Hilario

Tessa Xuan

Co-Directors

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