

Members of the Judiciary Committee,

We strongly oppose Senate Bill 297 (SB 297) as it threatens free speech, suppresses dissent, and sets a dangerous precedent by criminalizing legitimate political discourse. By adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism, this bill conflates criticism of Israeli policies with hate speech, chilling activism, academic freedom, and peaceful protest. While combating antisemitism is essential, this broad definition risks silencing voices advocating for Palestinian rights and undermines First Amendment protections.

The bill's expansion of "ethnic intimidation" to include riots and aggravated riots further criminalizes peaceful protest. Under vague definitions, demonstrations involving five or more individuals could be mischaracterized as "riots," subjecting activists to harsh penalties and increased surveillance. This selective enforcement disproportionately targets marginalized communities, including Muslim and Arab organizers, creating systemic barriers to advocacy and free expression.

We unequivocally condemn antisemitism, but SB 297 is not the solution. We **urge** you to **reject** this bill, which stifles legitimate political discourse and undermines fundamental rights. Instead, lawmakers should adopt a precise definition of antisemitism that protects against hate without criminalizing dissent or advocacy for justice. Protecting free speech and upholding constitutional rights is critical to ensuring a democratic and just society.

Thank you,

Emma Allen