



Hello my name is Sarah Livingston and I have been the Executive Director of Ohio University Hillel for 3 years. I'm here today to share testimony of a former student Zoe Felber (Class of '21) & myself.

Zoe: During my first day of classes freshman year, a professor told me, in front of 200 other students, that I would receive zeroes on the quizzes that I would miss for the Jewish holidays. I was devastated and humiliated--was this what the "real" world was like? My parents taught me that defeat and submission were never answers though, and I went back and forth with my professor, the division of Diversity & Inclusion, and the President of Ohio university before I was exempted from the assignments. The following summer, anxiety gnawed on me as I thought about this happening to another Jewish student, or even myself, again. I knew my Hillel director had crafted a policy to protect students through the office of DE&I so armed with that knowledge and the memory of what I went through the year before, I reached out to the DE&I Department and the President of the University to draft a letter for all faculty, staff, and professors, which stated the dates and importance of the Jewish holidays. The letter recommended that teachers avoid scheduling important assignments for those days. At the time, these experiences were exhausting and draining but if I helped even one student avoid the pain and humiliation of fighting for their religious rights then it was worth it.

Zoe's story is one of many students who I have assisted throughout my tenure at Ohio university Hillel. Often communicating directly with professors and partnering with the office of diversity and inclusion we have crafted a policy that provides students excused absences & full accommodations on missed assignments or exams for religious holidays. I am testifying in full support of House Bill 353 today requiring all Ohio State public institutions of higher education to adopt similar policies to the one that Ohio University already has in place. Fully protecting students from any discrimination based on religion and providing accommodations by law is a fantastic first step in preventing systemic antisemitism and helping our students find success as a very small minority within the Ohio State Public University system.