

HADASSAH
The Women's
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hadassah.org

The Honorable Jay Edwards
77 South High Street
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Chair Edwards,

My name is Carol Ann Schwartz, and I am the National President of Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America. I also have deep roots in Ohio, as a long-time Cincinnati resident who raised a family here, an executive of a three-generation Cincinnati family business and graduate of the University of Cincinnati and Xavier University.

Hadassah was founded over 100 years ago to bring healthcare to pre-state Israel. We are now the largest Jewish women's organization in the United States with nearly 300,000 members and supporters nationally and over 4,500 passionate members in Ohio. Hadassah has a global presence in 18 countries and a major healthcare system in Israel with two world-class hospital campuses in Jerusalem and youth villages supporting at-risk children. In the US, we advocate to heal the world through fighting antisemitism, advancing the US-Israel relationship and championing women's and public health.

As a Cincinnati resident and a Jewish woman, leader and mother I urge you to support H.B 606, legislation that will help ensure Ohio's colleges and universities are prepared to properly address hatred and bias, including antisemitism, on their campuses.

Hatred towards the Jewish people dates back to ancient times. Yet today, antisemitism is approaching critical levels. In 2023, reports of antisemitic incidents increased 140%. The rise in antisemitism is beyond more alarming in Ohio, with a nearly 300% increase in reported incidents across the state from 2022. We cannot let this become the norm.

This spring we saw an uproar of antisemitism and anti-Zionism on college campuses across the United States, including Ohio State University, Case Western Reserve University, and my alma-mater Xavier University. These acts of antisemitism deeply affect people's lives – students, faculty, staff and community members.

Hadassah is working to counter antisemitism through empowerment, education and advocacy. Our college students are afraid to walk on campus and proudly declare their Judaism and Zionism. Even before October 7th, Jewish students were intimidated and threatened by fellow students and faculty. Today, over 60% of Jewish students feel unsafe on their college campuses. As a former Jewish student who attended two Ohio universities and the mother of three former college students, I understand the fear that students, parents and faculty are facing. We must equip our students, staff, faculty and

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administration members with the proper tools to combat antisemitism and all forms of hate.

H.B 606 will require all colleges and universities in Ohio to adopt and enforce policies regarding racial, religious and ethnic bias, harassment and intimidation and include training on the policy and how to respond to hate incidents. The bill also ensures institutions have in place a system for accepting and investigating student complaints and allegations and requires clear annual reporting. At the same time, the bill requires institutions to create a campus task force on combating antisemitism, Islamophobia and hatred based on perceived or actual religion. It also requires public safety partnerships to ensure coordinated security for students facing hate crimes on and off campus.

In May we saw the outcomes of the complete failure of our universities in handling the alarming rise in antisemitism. We can and need to do better. In our work this year to understand and advocate for policies that will help fight the rising tide of antisemitism, many of the smart strategies included in H.B. 606 have been identified as best practices. Our campus leaders must be equipped with these commonsense practices to protect our campus communities ahead of the next school year.

The state legislature must do everything in its power to protect all students, staff, faculty and administration members from hate, bias and harassment to ensure that our state's institutions of higher education provide an environment of learning and curiosity, rather than hatred and bigotry. I strongly urge you to support H.B. 606.

Sincerely,

Carol Ann Gershuny Schwartz
National President, Hadassah
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Cincinnati, Ohio 45242