

**Howie Beigelman | Proponent Testimony: SB 32  
Judiciary Committee | Ohio Senate  
Columbus, OH | May 22, 2024**

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and Members of the Committee:

**Background and Statement of Interest**

Ohio Jewish Communities is the statewide government advocacy, public affairs, and community relations voice of our eight Jewish federations and their 150 community, cultural, social, and human services agencies on the front lines helping Ohioans of every faith – and of none – every day. We submit this testimony on their behalf as well.

We are here today in support of Sub. SB 32, to “grant civil immunity for certain injuries to a person who acts in self-defense or defense of another during the commission, or imminent commission, of an offense of violence to protect the members or guests of a nonprofit corporation under certain circumstances.” We are grateful to Senator Schaffer for sponsoring this important legislation.

**Our Communal Interest**

We have all seen the explosion of Jew-hatred across America, including right here in Ohio, since the October 7 Hamas massacre. FBI statistics bear this out<sup>1</sup>. While Jews are only about two percent of the US population, Jewish people are victims of nearly 60 percent of religious-based hate crimes. ADL’s most recent audit of antisemitism shows Ohio is not safe from this trend<sup>2</sup>.

We are grateful for the leadership of our elected officials at all levels of government to meet these threats, as well as the bravery of our federal, state, and local law enforcement who are on the front line against Jews and other minorities.

We know now that the threat we face is from all sides: right wing extremists, left wing anarchists, and religious fundamentalists. We know each of these can radicalize at frightening speed, and that they have no compunction about using weapons.

**How This Legislation Would Impact This**

Whether on duty, off duty, or as private security, we depend on armed individuals to be our last line of defense. What this legislation will do is very simply provide legal immunity to those defending houses of worship, preschools, summer camps, community centers, nursing homes, and college student groups from those with deadly intent.

The legislation does two things:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.adl.org/audit-antisemitic-incidents>

It ensures someone using a weapon to defend others shares legal immunity whether that incident happens on public property or private property, and whether the event at which this happens is for a for profit or not-for-profit institution; and

It narrowly tailors the immunity to ensure no other civil liabilities are impacted and that the individual cannot claim the immunity for wanton or malicious actions.

**Next Steps**

As the General Assembly and Congress, as well as county and local governments, continue to provide personnel and grant funding to keep nonprofits safe from attack, this carefully crafted legislation is necessary to ensure all Ohioans at risk can make full use of such protections.

We welcome any questions as well as the opportunity to work with you to enact this critical missing piece to community safety.

Thank you.

Howie Beigelman, President & CEO