

Ella Tabasky  
Brunswick  
LD 1351

Sen. Carney and Rep. Kuhn and members of the Joint Standing Committee of the Judiciary, My name is Ella Tabasky. I'm a Jewish resident of Brunswick, the daughter of a Holocaust educator, and I urge you to vote ought not to pass on LD 1351.

While I support efforts to address antisemitism under the Maine Human Rights Act, I cannot support the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition antisemitism.

I was raised to believe that being Jewish means standing for justice. I know what antisemitism is: its history, its pain, and the forms it takes today. I oppose the IHRA definition not because I take antisemitism lightly, but precisely because I take it seriously.

The IHRA definition blurs the line between antisemitism and criticism of Israel. Seven of its eleven examples focus not on Jews, but on the state of Israel. This is a dangerous conflation of legitimate political critique with hate.

One example claims that calling Israel a racist endeavor is antisemitic. In 2021, B'Tselem, Israel's largest and most respected human rights group, declared that Israel operates an apartheid regime: "a regime of Jewish supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea." That same year, Human Rights Watch, a globally respected watchdog, released a detailed report concluding that Israeli authorities are committing the crimes of apartheid and persecution as defined under international law.

These are not casual accusations. They are serious, evidence-based legal assessments. We must be able to name injustice without fear of being silenced.

This concern is not mine alone. In 2023, over 100 civil and human rights organizations, including Israeli groups, urged the United Nations not to adopt the IHRA definition. Signatories included B'Tselem, Breaking the Silence, Adalah, ACLU, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Palestinian human rights group Al-Haq, and more.

There are alternative definitions worth your consideration, such as the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism, which more clearly distinguishes between antisemitism and legitimate criticism of Israeli policies. I've included links to some resources at the end of my written testimony and strongly encourage the committee to explore them.

Please vote ought not to pass on LD 1351. Maine deserves a framework that combats antisemitism without suppressing voices of conscience or erasing the experiences of those living under oppression.

Thank you.

Suggested Resources:

<https://www.btselem.org/topic/apartheid>

<https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution>

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/04/04/human-rights-and-other-civil-society-groups-urge-united-nations-respect-human>

<https://www.jfrej.org/news/2017/11/understanding-antisemitism-an-offering-to-our-movement/>

<https://www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org/2023/11/09/antisemitism-dangerous/>

<https://www.reconstructingjudaism.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Lanser-on-IHRA-updated.pdf>

<https://jerusalemdeclaration.org/>

<https://www.ijvcanada.org/jerusalem-declaration/>