

April 6, 2025

Dear Committee on the Judiciary,

I'm writing to ask you to oppose LD 1351.

It is absolutely important that we identify, address, and firmly oppose antisemitism wherever it occurs—it is a horrible and very real threat. Jewish people have the right to safety and dignity in Maine and around the world. The reason this bill is troublesome is because of the definition of antisemitism it would adopt.

In 2023, **104** different human and civil rights organizations—including the ACLU, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch—signed a [letter to the United Nations Secretary-General](#) asking him **not to adopt this very definition of antisemitism**. They write:

*“the IHRA definition has often been used to wrongly label criticism of Israel as antisemitic, and thus chill and sometimes suppress, non-violent protest, activism and speech critical of Israel and/or Zionism, including in the US and Europe...*

*“The targets of accusations of antisemitism based on the IHRA definition have included university students and professors, grassroots organizers, human rights and civil rights organizations, humanitarian groups and members of the US Congress, who either document or criticize Israeli policies and who speak in favor of Palestinian human rights.”*

The IHRA definition was never supposed to be used in a legal context by governments or institutions. Even the primary author of the IHRA definition, Ken Stern, argued against its adoption by institutions including the ABA, stating that the IHRA definition has been used as “a blunt instrument to label anyone an antisemite.” The signatories of this letter offer the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism as one alternative that is less vulnerable to abuse (i.e. political use of the definition to suppress free speech and important human rights work.)

Additionally, I find it suspicious that antisemitism is singled out in LD 1351 when instances of Islamophobia have risen alongside antisemitism. The State of Maine has a responsibility to protect *all* people from discrimination and to protect the right to free speech for everyone. This bill would not fulfill that responsibility. Please oppose LD 1351.

Sincerely,

Hadriane Hatfield