

2025-4-7_LD 1351 Testimony to Maine Legislature Judiciary Committee
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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share testimony with the Committee. I'm here as both a concerned Mainer and a human rights professional to express my strong opposition to LD 1351, which proposes adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism. While I believe deeply in the importance of confronting and combating antisemitism in all its forms, this bill—by endorsing a definition that conflates antisemitism with criticism of the state of Israel—poses a direct threat to free speech, academic freedom, and the broader fight for justice, both in the U.S. and internationally.

The IHRA definition has been widely criticized for its vagueness and potential misuse. Several of its illustrative examples label criticism of Israel and Zionism as antisemitic, even when such critiques are grounded in legitimate human rights concerns. This conflation stifles essential dialogue and undermines the ability of individuals and communities to hold governments accountable—including the Israeli government—for violations of international law. Suppressing such speech does not make us safer; it makes us less democratic.

Furthermore, the weaponization of antisemitism in this way has the opposite of its intended effect. It does not protect Jewish communities—it endangers them by aligning Jewish safety with state violence and silencing those, including many Jews, who advocate for Palestinian rights. The bill, in its current form, risks marginalizing Jewish voices who are critical of Israel, while also silencing broader coalitions fighting for human rights and dignity. This plays into the hands of white supremacist movements and far-right ideologues—many of whom are the true sources of rising antisemitic violence and rhetoric.

Instead of adopting the IHRA definition, I urge this committee to consider the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (JDA) as a more precise and rights-affirming alternative. The JDA clearly distinguishes between antisemitism and legitimate criticism of a government. It offers a robust framework for identifying and fighting antisemitism without infringing on protected speech or undermining the work of human rights advocates, including many within the Jewish community.

I respectfully ask that you oppose LD 1351 as written and support an amended version that adopts the Jerusalem Declaration instead. Let Maine be a state that champions both the safety of Jewish communities and the constitutional rights we all depend on. Thank you for your time and for considering my testimony.