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Orono  
LD 1351

I am writing to the Joint Standing Committee of the Judiciary in order to urge you to vote ought not to pass on LD 1351.

I support efforts to use the Maine Human Rights act to protect Mainers from antisemitism. However, the definition proposed in this bill means I must oppose it.

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism that this bill would have enshrined in law is extremely vague to the point of being unusable. This is not to mention that it is very explicitly called a "non-legally binding" definition by the IHRA themselves. I hope you have all read the definition, but I will repeat it here:

“Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”

This definition is ridiculous. According to the IHRA, an undefined perception of Jews manifested in a non-hateful way towards non-Jewish individuals is categorized as antisemitic. The IHRA definition is broad to the point that practically any act relating to Jews could be called antisemitism by it.

Far better are definitions such as the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism's are available to serve this role. To protect Jews, the meaning of antisemitism needs to be well defined and understood. Today, we see the Trump administration using the word "antisemitism" like a cudgel to crush well-reasoned criticism of the actions of the State of Israel. If a definition as vague as the IHRA is adopted here in Maine, there is no doubt that it will be used the same way.

Please vote ought not to pass on LD 1351. Maine deserves a framework that combats antisemitism without suppressing voices of conscience.

Thank you.