

Azlan Ahmad
Surry
LD 1351

To the Honorable Members of the Maine Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, I am unable to attend this meeting in person due to a medical conflict I am unable to reschedule away from the appointed time of this Public Hearing. I am sad about this, because I am a naturalized citizen from Singapore, educated to the MBA level in America and proud to call Maine my home. My wife and I reside in Surry, and every day we try to take calm from the view from nearby Patten Bay. We need this extra boost of calm because of the strife we feel every day especially since I am a Muslim, and my wife and I suffer not only from the ongoing genocide in Palestine but that our own tax dollars are supporting such an immoral, unethical and internationally ILLEGAL action (except apparently in Israel and America). My wife is a member of Jewish Voices for Peace and has learned much from Jewish Currents Editor-in-Chief Peter Beinart. We, and JVP, know that the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism conflates criticism of Israel and Zionism with antisemitism, and is therefore FLAWED. And because it is FLAWED, the consequences to me and others who wish to protest the use of our American tax dollars to pay for and support ethnic cleansing, apartheid, the annihilation or removal of an entire Palestinian people therefore becomes an infringement of my free speech to protest. How can we protest if we cannot use the right and correct words? Being unable to use the right words -- to call it what it is -- would therefore greatly infringe on free speech and our collective ability to help hold governments, like Israel, accountable.

There are those currently in power who are clearly actively trying to suppress free speech and the peaceful right to protest. We've seen it time and time again even within the last 90 days so we all still have fresh images in our mind's eye. To adopt this flawed definition of antisemitism would be a cruel attack on free speech which should most definitely NOT come to Maine. WE ARE BETTER THAN THAT!

I appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony and furthermore would welcome the opportunity – both myself and my wife – to meet personally for further discussion. As a global-culture couple we love Maine for its humanity, frankly better than other locales we have experienced. We cannot even imagine this bill review process even getting to this point and we feel we must do everything in our power to thwart its adoption. Communicating rationally should bode well when the parties care about democracy.

Respectfully submitted for your consideration, and with thanks.

Azlan Ahmad
Surry, Retired