

Sen. Carney and Rep. Kuhn and members of the Joint Standing Committee of the Judiciary, My name is Lara Rosen. I'm a Jewish resident of Portland, and I urge you to vote ought not to pass on LD 1351.

As someone who grew up as one of only a handful of Jewish kids in a small town in Western Massachusetts in the eighties and nineties, I know what antisemitism is on a personal level. I was the target of antisemitic comments and microaggressions, and grew up with the spectre of the Holocaust in the air I breathed.

I can confidently say that adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism will not curb antisemitism or protect Jews. The definition allows for the conflation of antisemitism and anti-Zionism and for criticism of Israel to be considered antisemitic. In fact, seven of its eleven examples of antisemitism focus not on Jews, but on the state of Israel.

But the state of Israel is not synonymous with the Jewish people. And conflating the two makes Jews less safe, making it easier to blame Jews for Israel's actions and exacerbating white nationalist threats.

But I am also skeptical that this bill is intended to protect Jews. We are already covered under the Maine Human Rights Act, so why introduce a bill to adopt the IHRA definition?

I am very concerned that this bill lays the groundwork for suppression of protected speech at the state level. We have seen the Trump administration abduct and disappear university students for speaking out against Israel's genocide in Gaza under the pretext of combatting antisemitism. And currently, the U.S. House Committee on Education and Workforce is demanding that Bowdoin supply a list of students involved in "antisemitic" incidents, chillingly defined as "any incidents involving the targeting of Jews, Judaism, Israel, Israelis, Zionism, or Zionists, or incidents otherwise identified as antisemitic" ([https://edworkforce.house.gov/uploadedfiles/ltr\\_to\\_bowdoin\\_coll\\_3.27.2025.pdf](https://edworkforce.house.gov/uploadedfiles/ltr_to_bowdoin_coll_3.27.2025.pdf)).

This dangerously broad definition of antisemitism derives from the IHRA definition, and is being used to target opponents of Israel's actions in Gaza, including kidnapping and extrajudicial removal of members of our communities.

Jewish tradition teaches us to fight for the oppressed as for ourselves (Midrash Genesis Rabbah 24:7). To adopt the IHRA definition when Jews are already protected under the Maine Human Rights Act would be to actively support the oppression of Maine people exercising their first amendment rights. I urge you to vote ought not to pass on LD 1351, and protect your Jewish constituents and our first amendment rights.

Thank you.

