

Katie Liberman  
Owls Head  
LD 1351

Good morning,

I am writing to you this morning regarding bill LD1351. My name is Katie Liberman, and I'm a Jewish resident of Owls Head. In regards to LD1351, I strongly urge you to not pass this bill as it does not protect Jewish people and it circumvents first amendment rights of Mainers. Conflating legitimate criticism of a foreign government with antisemitism is not only incredibly harmful to our constitutional rights, but also is not a good way to protect American Jews.

The definition of antisemitism described by the IHRA would set a dangerous precedent for curbing free speech in Maine. The IHRA Definition includes 11 "examples" of antisemitism, 7 of which focus on the State of Israel. While I do agree we need to tackle antisemitism where it rears its ugly head, this is not the way to go about this. There are better options for defining antisemitism; this definition by Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism is far more appropriate and really gets to the root of what I and many others feel actually defines antisemitism:

"Antisemitism is discrimination, prejudice, hostility or violence against Jews as Jews (or Jewish institutions as Jewish)."

Criticizing a government that is actively manufacturing a genocide of the Palestinian people, defying international law, and making Jews everywhere unsafe is not antisemitism. Something that should be noted is that Jewish and Palestinian safety is inherently intertwined, and denying that will only continue to make Jews unsafe. You might be surprised to learn that many Jews do not feel beholden to Israel, nor do we worship false idols—no country is exempt from scrutiny and international law. The Torah teaches us that every life is sacred and a universe of its own. Many Jews feel that to be in diaspora and wandering the ends of the earth without a "Jewish homeland" is sacred in itself.

To Rep. Ann Higgins Matlack, Rep. Valli D. Geiger, and the judiciary committee: please do not pass LD1351—not only was this piece of legislation not introduced by a Jewish person, but it circumvents Jewish Mainers' say in this process. This legislation felt rushed and would use Maine Jews as political pawns to limit free speech. We are not pawns. The Jewish community of Maine is not a monolith either. Limiting free speech about Israel would be a slippery slope that leads to the destruction of civil liberties we often take for granted. Maine deserves a legislative framework that fights antisemitism that does not suppress the voices of others or erase the experiences of those living under oppression.

Thank you.