

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Paige Lyman and I live in Farmington. I am here to testify in opposition to LD 1351: An Act to Require Antisemitism to Be Considered as Motivation When Determining a Violation of a Criminal or Civil Law.

You can't tell by merely reading its name, but this bill will enshrine a vague, confusing, and ultimately harmful definition of antisemitism into Maine law. That is, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, or, IHRA, working definition of antisemitism.

At best, the IHRA definition of antisemitism is ambiguous and open to interpretation. This will do a disservice to our Jewish community by making antisemitism harder to accurately point out and fight against. At worst, the IHRA definition is used to conflate valid criticisms of the state of Israel with antisemitism. We've already seen this happening in the United States, where activists who express real concerns about Israel's human rights abuses in Palestine are labeled as "antisemitic" and sometimes even apprehended by ICE without due process. This kind of repression is blatantly unconstitutional and does not belong in this country or in Maine.

So, I would like to propose a more robust alternative to the IHRA definition, namely, the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism, or, the JDA. In our fight against antisemitism, it is important that we have a clear and specific definition so we can more easily identify antisemitism if/when we see it. The JDA does this by giving more extensive and specific guidelines on what is and what is not antisemitism and is therefore much more useful and effective than the IHRA definition. With a better definition of antisemitism, we can better fight against it.

I conclude by asking you to please vote "Ought not to pass" on LD 1351 to protect our freedom of expression and our Jewish community. Thank you.