

I am writing to oppose LD 1351. This proposed legislation has nothing to do with antisemitism. It uses the legally nonbinding working definition of “antisemitism” adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, which conflates antisemitism with criticism of Israel.

As a Jew, I grew up with an innate understanding of antisemitism. My grandparents escaped from Czechoslovakia to the United States in 1939, along with my then 9 year-old father. Most of my family, including my great grandparents, were exterminated in concentration camps simply because they were Jewish.

Nazi genocide should never happen again. “Never again” should mean never again for **anyone**.

But the IHRA working definition was adopted not simply to remember the Nazi genocide and prevent it from happening again, but to restrict legitimate criticism of Israel. That criticism is at an all-time high. When Israel bombs hospitals in Gaza, or a journalists’ tent as it did yesterday, when I see images of Palestinians burned alive or blown to bits with weapons supplied by my tax dollars, when I think of over two million people displaced from their homes and dying because Israel is using starvation as a weapon, when I think of these things I think of my great grandparents in a cattle car headed to Treblinka.

When I think of Palestinians crowded into so-called “safe zones” in Gaza, denied humanitarian aid, I think of the Warsaw Ghetto.

And just for saying these thoughts out loud, I am antisemitic under the IHRA working definition, because one of their examples of antisemitism is “drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.”

Genocide should never happen again, to anyone, but it’s happening right now. Global support for Palestinian rights is at an all-time high. The Israeli lobby is pushing hard for widespread adoption of the IHRA definition, and it’s already having a dangerous and unprecedented effect on free speech in this country. We’re seeing students kidnapped and deported under the guise of “preventing antisemitism.” We’re seeing professors and researchers losing their jobs for daring to speak out. Is this the kind of country we want to live in?

Please see LD 1351 for what it is, an attack on our most precious First Amendment freedoms. This bill is not about creating a safe environment for anyone. Rather, it takes us down a very dark road to the very threats we faced during McCarthyism. Please vote **OUGHT NOT TO PASS**.

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