Sulheya Almatri Maine Coalition for Palestine LD 1351

Thank you for hearing those today who have worked hard to combat racism of all kinds. We all want the same thing here today, those on both sides of this issue, and that is to live peacefully and to be allowed to just be who we each are and live into the identities passed down to us from our families. As a Palestinian American I am here to share that I have been silenced by the IHRA definition of antisemitism my entire life as it has been built into fabric of our society by well funded propaganda. I am pleading with you not to allow this bill to go forward and create the same conditions I grew up in for young Palestinian children in the state of Maine. I was scared to share my identity with friends, classmates and teachers growing up. To be Palestinian in this country, due to definitions like IHRA, makes you question whether you should share your identify, or share the struggle of your people in Palestine without persecution. The IHRA definition dangerously conflates criticism of Israel with antisemitism. It therefore suppresses free speech and peaceful protest of an ongoing apartheid and genocide according to world courts and UN resolutions. And those watching footage of Gaza on television do not need a UN resolution to tell them what is right and what is wrong. The IHRA definition will have a chilling effect on free speech and our ability to stand up for what is right. Please understand, I want true antisemitism to be combatted. No people should have to live in fear of persecution for who we are, not my Jewish friends and not my Palestinian family. I ask that the bill be changed to adopt the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism instead, as the Jerusalem Declaration distinguishes between antisemitism and criticism of the state of Israel. This judiciary will vote for persecuting one group of people over another if it pushes forward this bill as written. It can serve many more people and be a tool for true justice if it adopts the Jerusalem Declaration instead. We all want the same for our families, thank you for your time this morning.