

April 7, 2025

Dear Senator Carney,

I'm writing regarding Bill LD 1351 - which would adopt the definition of anti-semitism from the IHRA into Maine law. I oppose this bill.

I'm a Jewish American. I have experienced anti-semitic language in my life - and I'm well aware of the deep history of hatred towards Jewish people and it's many manifestations in our current world. I condemn all forms of bigotry and hate, both in speech and action.

Nevertheless, I am also a strong supporter of free speech. My concern with the IHRA definition is that it has been interpreted to define criticism of Israel as anti-semitic. Admittedly, the IHRA definition says that "criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic." However, other text in the document is vague regarding criticism of Israel and has been used to shut down criticism of Israel. Quoting a letter to the UN from Human Rights Watch "Some advocates of the IHRA working definition have presented it as a non-controversial "consensus definition". However, many leading antisemitism experts, scholars of Jewish studies and the Holocaust, as well as free speech and anti-racism experts, have challenged the definition, arguing that it restricts legitimate criticism of Israel and harms the fight against antisemitism." Full text of the letter here: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/04/04/human-rights-and-other-civil-society-groups-urge-united-nations-respect-human>

We already have the Maine Human Rights Act. LD 1351 is unnecessary and has the potential to shut down free speech. Please vote against this bill.

Sincerely,

Carl Dimow
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