

Claire Muscat
Portland
LD 1351

Good morning,

My name is Claire Muscat, a resident of Portland. I grew up in Cape Elizabeth as a part of the Jewish community. I am imploring that you vote against the LD 1351 bill. It is a mechanism to spread political oppression and suppress free speech under the guise of Jewish safety. Antisemitism is a real and pressing issue, one that is close to my heart. However, I refuse to let it be warped in such a way that contributes to the whittling away of our rights to free speech and dissent.

Let me be clear: criticism of Israel is not antisemitism. This is a lie that has been pushed by war profiteers and white nationalists that has nothing to do with Jewish safety and everything to do with suppressing free speech and the voices of those fighting against oppression. Equating criticism of Israel with antisemitism, as the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) does, literally puts the safety and livelihoods of those fighting for justice and human rights at risk; just in the last few weeks, the state department has revoked over 300 student visas for the “crime” of simply speaking out against Israeli policy. State department employees are now required to check all visa applicants’ social media for content in support of the people of Palestine. I cannot comprehend how peaceful protest and sharing of information constitute antisemitism while Elon Musk making a Nazi salute on stage does not.

I am not alone in this sentiment. There are many Jews in Maine and elsewhere that are also adamant that this will cause much more harm than good, and globally there are dozens of human rights organizations that have urged the United Nations not to adopt the IHRA definition. To pass this bill would be an erasure of Jewish voices and other people who have devoted their lives to justice and human rights.

I have experienced antisemitism first hand many times in my life. It is an issue I understand intimately and take incredibly seriously. I wholeheartedly believe that adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism will actually contribute to antisemitism by diluting its meaning and scapegoating Jews as the catalyst behind the steadily increasing revocation of our rights to free speech, protest, and dissent. I am urging you to vote Ought Not To Pass for the protection of Jewish people as well as the protection of anyone exercising their right to free speech.

Thank you for your time and consideration.