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HB 2299  
Opponent  
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I appreciate this opportunity to share my opposition to this bill. My name is Sarah Vernier and I am someone who wears masks on a daily basis for personal health and safety.

I am in particular quite concerned by the language in this bill about antisemitism including the wearing of masks to conceal identity with the intent to harass or discriminate against Jewish students, faculty, or employees on school property.

This bill defines anti-semitism using the IHRA's working definition of anti-semitism; this definition has been controversial and rejected by many Jewish groups themselves. In 2018, over 40 Jewish groups worldwide condemned the IHRA definition as "worded in such a way as to be easily adopted or considered by western governments to intentionally equate legitimate criticisms of Israel and advocacy for Palestinian rights with antisemitism, as a means to suppress the former". To restate, HB 2299 allows for broad interpretation of antisemitism and retaliation under the law. We must be able to distinguish between nuanced criticism (which no person or government is immune to based on any characteristic) and the despicable act of antisemitism.

Broad language like this bill contains would expose anyone who was trying to protect their health and safety to charges of antisemitism. And while many would argue that those who weren't breaking the law wouldn't be harmed, that's simply not how our legal system works de facto. In many, many cases, people are harmed by laws that should never have applied to them.

It also serves to chill Americans' first amendment protected right to assemble by limiting the right to assembly. This is deeply concerning to me. I oppose this bill in its current form.

Sarah Vernier  
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