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HB 2299 Prohibiting discriminatory practices on the basis of religion at public educational institutions  
Proponent

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**Thank you, Miss Chairwoman and education committee members,** My name is Adam Beren. I grew up and live in Wichita, Kansas and am the owner of Berexco LLC, an oil and gas production company whose headquarters are also in Wichita. Berexco will be celebrating our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.

Today, I am here as part of my second job, which formally started six years ago when I founded the Combat Antisemitism Movement (CAM), a global organization fighting antisemitism with activities in the United States, Europe, Latin America, and Israel. I am here to speak in support of [HB 2299](#), a bill to help address and prohibit discrimination, including antisemitic incidents, in public K-12 schools and postsecondary institutions right here in Kansas. I would like to thank Attorney General Kris Kobach and Chair Susan Estes for supporting this crucial legislation and for their strong leadership on the issue.

While my parents experienced some discrimination when I was growing up, including not being allowed into our local country club, I thankfully have not confronted antisemitism for most of my life in Wichita. However, a seemingly harmless incident at my children's private school 10 years ago alerted me to a problem brewing in our country.

Since October 7, 2023, our country has seen an explosion of antisemitic activity, endangering the lives of ALL students and the Jewish community. K-12 schools, as well as college and university campuses, have become hotbeds of antisemitic activity across the country, as students, faculty, administrators, and staff have participated in anti-Israel demonstrations, lock-ins, and encampments. Jewish students and faculty have been harassed, physically harmed, intimidated, forced to be locked into buildings, and blocked from entering parts of their campuses. You will hear from a few of those students today.

To illustrate the level of hate in our country, CAM's Antisemitism Research Center (ARC) recorded an astounding total of 6,326 antisemitic incidents in 2024, representing a 107.7% increase from 2023, which was high already. The ARC also recorded an astounding 742 incidents on U.S. campuses in 2024, a 200% increase compared to 2022. CAM recently commissioned a [survey](#) that found that 3.5 million American Jews have personally encountered antisemitism since 10/7, including 380,000 Jewish children.

While nowhere near the problems we have read about in New York, California, Massachusetts, or Washington, DC, Kansas has unfortunately not been immune to antisemitism. Following Hamas's massacre in October 2023, Rockhurst professor [Mohamed Kohia](#) stated in a sermon that October 7<sup>th</sup> was "amazing" and a "miracle". He later said the October 7<sup>th</sup> attacks were "just a drill for what is going to come next." In November 2023, pro-Palestinian protestors at The University of Kansas (KU) occupied the second floor of [Strong Hall](#), draping large banners that read "Glory to the Martyred", "Stop the Palestine Genocide", and "Free Gaza." In late 2023, [student-led anti-Israel walkouts](#) also occurred at KU with antisemitic signs and chants. In May 2024, a group of students at KU attempted to establish an [encampment outside Fraser Hall](#), organized by KU Students for Justice in Palestine. Another protest took place at [Washburn University](#) in May 2024, as roughly 40 pro-Palestinian students protested, demanding the university divest financial ties to Israel. This protest came one day after Attorney General Kobach [denounced](#) the protests at KU, calling them illegal and antisemitic.

Jewish students across the country have filed Title VI complaints with the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) in the last few years with very little results. A few weeks ago, President Trump issued an Executive Order deploying all levers of American federal power to root out antisemitism, including expediting all outstanding Title VI complaints. We hope this step will start to change things, but state legislators across the country believe it is also time for the states to get more involved and take decisive action. We do too, especially in light of recent calls to eliminate the Federal Department of Education.

Consistent with the Federal government, HB 2299 clearly defines "antisemitism" using the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism, including its contemporary examples. The Kansas State House and Senate passed a concurrent resolution adopting the IHRA working definition of antisemitism, including its examples, in February and March 2022. Most importantly, the bill brings accountability to any antisemitism in our K-20 public schools by authorizing the Attorney General to investigate violations and assess civil penalties under the Kansas act against discrimination if necessary.

This legislation is a timely and critical bill that will hopefully prevent any further issues in our K-20 schools. While antisemitism is thankfully not as pervasive like in other states, passage of HB 2299 will demonstrate that Kansas legislators are taking a proactive measure. It also sends a message in Kansas and to the rest of the country of our commitment to combating hatred in all forms while ensuring the safety and dignity of its Jewish community. Every student, faculty, and staff member deserves to feel safe, respected, and valued at any educational institution.

Thank you to the chairwoman and the entire Education Committee for working diligently to push this bill forward today and taking a strong stance against hate and bigotry of all kinds. The Jewish community is grateful and appreciative of your efforts, and we look forward to this bill's passage. I will stand for questions.