

## Personal Information

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## Bill Information

Bill Number: HB 2299

Position: Opponent

Date of Hearing: Tuesday, February 11, 2025, 1:30 PM

## Written Testimony

Dear Members of the House Education Committee,

As a Jewish Kansan, I write in strong opposition to HB2299. While antisemitism is a serious problem in our society, this bill does not address it in good faith. Instead, it weaponizes the definition of antisemitism to suppress legitimate political speech and criminalize support for Palestinian rights.

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism is just that –a working definition. It was not written nor intended to be used in legal definitions. There are [other, more clear definitions](#) of antisemitism that can be adopted without causing the harm that this definition will cause.

The State of Israel does not represent all Jewish people, and it is false to claim otherwise. Those defending Israel's actions—actions that have been widely condemned as apartheid and ethnic cleansing—are attempting to redefine antisemitism to shield Israel from accountability. This is both dangerous and disingenuous. A principled stand against genocide is not antisemitism. Calling out the Israeli government's ongoing occupation and oppression of Palestinians is not antisemitism. Acknowledging the historical reality of the Nakba, in which hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forcibly displaced, is not antisemitism.

Yet under this bill, these statements could be labeled hate speech. As an antizionist Jew, I oppose the 76+ year occupation of Palestinian lands by Israel, the apartheid state Palestinians are forced to live within in their home country, and the most recent genocide in Gaza which was the most horrific criminal act of the modern era. And yet, by HB2299's definition, I could be considered antisemitic for engaging in peaceful protest for these things. This is absurd.

We must oppose antisemitism in all forms from all sources, and that means understanding what antisemitism is. If it is necessary to define antisemitism, we have better definitions than the IHRA definition that we can use. But the IHRA definition is focused mainly on defining

criticism of Israel as antisemitism, not on the real antisemitism too many Jews, myself included, face in the United States and in our state of Kansas.

This bill is unnecessary, overly broad, and fundamentally at odds with First Amendment protections. The ability to criticize government policies—whether those of the United States, Israel, or any other nation—is essential to democracy. Redefining antisemitism in a way that conflates it with criticism of Israel devalues the term itself, ultimately making it harder to fight real antisemitism when it arises.

I urge you to reject HB2299.

Sincerely,

Amanda Culbertson, Overland Park

**Signature**

Full Name (Typed): Amanda Culbertson  
Date: February 9, 2025