

Opposition Testimony for HB 2299 – Written

Steven Ringel

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Bill Number: HB 2299

Position: Opponent

Date of Hearing: Tuesday, Feb. 11, 2025

Written Testimony

I am firmly opposed to HB 2299 as it is a dangerous attempt to weaponize the definition of antisemitism, silence dissent, and criminalize support for Palestine. The people of Kansas deserve legislators who 1) uphold a safe environment for people of all faiths and nationalities and 2) who uphold our constitutional right to freedom of speech. I oppose equating criticism of Israel with antisemitism, threatening universities and institutions with fines for events that are critical of Israel, censoring discussions of Palestine in classrooms, giving the Kansas Attorney General power to investigate and subpoena activists, and targeting masked protestors.

This is a McCarthy era tactic to silence, intimidate, and oppress. It is even more audacious that you threaten to do it under the banner of antisemitism – something that deserves our legitimate response to ensure the safety of our Jewish neighbors and friends. Additionally, it is abhorrent to be criminalizing masks as respiratory illnesses including COVID, influenza, and tuberculosis threaten the health and wellbeing of Kansans.

Leave Kansans out of your political theater. We possess the intelligence to assess situations as they stand and the courage to make decisions that are right. This bill is steeped in dangerous conflation that seek to confuse, divide, and harm. Take a break from parroting hateful rhetoric and do your jobs to ensure Kansans have access to a quality education, jobs with a livable wage, affordable food, and clean air and water.

Steven Ringel

Feb. 9, 2025