

## Testimony Submission - Kansas House Bill 2299

Subject: HB 2299 - Opponent - Written-Only Testimony

### Personal Information

Full Name: Lutfi Abughazala

Organization (if applicable): NA

Email Address: lutfy.gz2009@gmail.com

### Bill Information

Bill Number: HB 2299

Position: Opponent

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

### Written Testimony

I am against this bill because it compares the criticism of israel as being antisemitic, Israel is a country and it is not a religion, I fully agree that any antisemitic actions should be punishable by law, but mixing what a state does with what the jewish people have suffered is a way to limit free speech, the definition of antisemitism should not include the criticism of the state of israel as its current prime minister is wanted for war crimes.

### Signature

Full Name : Lutfi Abughazala

Date: 02/10/2025s

## **Personal Information**

Full Name: Amelia Allen

Organization (if applicable):

Email Address: amelia.dev@proton.me

Phone Number (optional):

## **Bill Information**

Bill Number: HB 2299

Position: Opponent

Date of Hearing: February 7, 2025

## **Written Testimony**

I am writing in opposition to HB 2299, which if passed would require public schools across Kansas to adopt a definition of antisemitism that has been widely discredited and would empower the attorney general to bring civil charges against people who are accused of meeting that definition. This definition equates criticism of contemporary actions of the state of Israel with antisemitism, which could be used to target any who are critical of the state of Israel's military actions in Gaza. Further, the combination of the discredited definition of antisemitism with the line targeting people who "wear masks to conceal their identity" would effectively become a ban on medical masks when protesting the state of Israel's actions in Gaza. People should be able to protest safely, and for many of us that means being able to wear a mask to protect ourselves from respiratory illnesses.

## **Signature**

Full Name (Typed): Amelia Allen

Date: 2/7/2025

## Testimony Submission - Kansas House Bill 2299

Sara Anees

sa.activism@outlook.com

Bill Number: HB 2299

Position: Opponent

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

This bill is written under the guise of preventing discrimination, when actually, it encourages discrimination and threatens constitutional rights and civil liberties. This bill is a plain effort to curtail the outpour of free speech against the violent political ideology of zionism by falsely conflating anti-war protest with antisemitism. Violent political ideologies are not protected categories, and have no place at our institutions of learning. This bill also threatens civil penalties against people wearing masks, in effect excluding medically vulnerable people from safely exercising their first amendment rights. If passed, this creates a precedent of inaccessibility that undermines one of the greatest successes of former Senator Bob Dole's career – the Americans with Disabilities Act. This bill is both anti-American and antithetical to Kansas values.

Sara Anees

Date: 2.8.2025

## Opposition Testimony for HB 2299 – Written

Katherine Barrow

[kat.barrow12@gmail.com](mailto:kat.barrow12@gmail.com)

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 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.

Katherine Barrow

Feb. 9, 2025

**Full Name:** Alexander Geoffrey Bishel

**Email:** [Agbishel@gmail.com](mailto:Agbishel@gmail.com)

**Bill Number:** HB 2299

**Position:** Opponent

**Written Testimony**

I read and compared HB 2299 to our discrimination law and Kansas already has the power to do 99.9% of the things the bill says under the current law. From what I can tell this just seems like a sneaky way to backdoor ban and intimidate people for wearing PPE and costume store masks in public spaces and protests. That's the only difference I can see. I definitely oppose that.

I've also heard activist organizations think the holocaust remembrance association's definition of antisemitism is too old and outdated. I'm not confident I'm totally informed about why, but I think that might be because the definition is from 2016 and the results of the investigation by Amnesty International came years after.

Anyway I think the legislature should err on the side of caution and leave the law as is, because the commission already has the power to subpoena people anyway, and these changes just seem symbolic, and hyperbolic, without much purpose.

**Signature:** Alex Bishel

**Date:** 02-8-2025

Mitch Brian  
Professor of Media Art & Design – UMKC  
5427 Fairway Rd  
Fairway KS 66205  
[MitchB1313@aol.com](mailto:MitchB1313@aol.com)  
913-488-5427

HB2299 - Prohibiting discriminatory practices on the basis of religion at public educational institutions and authorizing the attorney general to investigate violations and assess civil penalties under the Kansas act against discrimination.

Opponent

Feb 8, 2025

To the Chair and the Committee

My name is Mitch Brian and I live in Fairway. I was born in Dodge City, raised in Hutchinson and I teach in the Media Art and Design Department at UMKC. I have been an educator there and elsewhere for almost 40 years.

My family is Jewish.

I wanted to write about the upcoming, well-intentioned but problematic bill HB 229. I do not believe it should go forward in its current state.

The Bill prohibits state funded educational institutions from engaging in practices or implementing policies that "promote or tolerate antisemitism." And empower the AG to investigate such acts. Antisemitism "means the same as defined as IHRA's working definition and its examples."

The problem with the IHRA Definition is that it's working examples almost all tie back to Israel. Given that fact, the definition has been used largely as a cudgel against pro Palestine demonstrations that are not antisemitic.

The definition also has some pretty huge gaps in it that make it very unhelpful regarding the biggest antisemitic threats in the US: white supremacy & Christian nationalism.

For instance, I'm pretty sure Musk's Nazi Salute does not rate being considered antisemitic based solely on the IHRA Definition's criteria.

In our household (and in my classroom) we believe that opposing the government of Israel is not being antisemitic. We can criticize it and its policies and still observe our faith.

For example, saying Israel was built on racist foundations likely would meet the bill's definition of antisemitism. Unfortunately the reality involving the founding of Israel and the displacement of Palestinians feels pretty racist to me.

Additionally, the bill expands the definition of antisemitism to include "wearing a mask to conceal one's identity with intent to harass." I find this anti-mask stuff suspect. Protestors sometimes wear a kefeya across their faces or even face protecting N95 masks in indoor spaces. This should not be against the law.

Most of all, these tricky definitions, however well-intended, limits what can be said in the classroom. As a teacher I resent this.

The choice of definition and expanded enforcement powers will have a chilling effect specifically in academia and on campuses. Which should be a zone of free expression.

If we actually want to fight antisemitism, arguing over its definition and conflating it with opposition to Israel & anti-Zionism muddies the water. It narrows our scope rather than breaking down the structural forces that encourage every other form of bigotry.

Thank you for your time.

Mitch Brian

## Opposition Testimony for HB 2299 – Written

Audrey Brooker

audrey.brooker@gmail.com

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.

Audrey Brooker

Feb. 9, 2025



**From:** [Haidee](#)  
**To:** [House Education](#); [Susan Estes](#)  
**Subject:** Testimony for HB2299  
**Date:** Monday, February 10, 2025 7:05:22 AM

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## Personal Information

Full Name: Haidee Clauer

Email Address: [hkclauer@gmail.com](mailto:hkclauer@gmail.com)

## Bill Information

Bill Number: HB 2299

Position: Opponent

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

## Written Testimony

Dear Kansas Legislators,

This testimony urges you to vote against HB 2299. I am writing to you on behalf of myself, a community member who spent my entire childhood in Jewish school, synagogue, and youth group in Kansas, and my family members, who are deeply rooted members of Kansas City's Jewish community.

We testify that this bill adopting the IHRA resolution of antisemitism into state law *will not make Jews safer*. HB299 would codify the IHRA's "contemporary examples" -- several of which conflate and confuse legitimate analysis and criticism of the Israeli government with antisemitism, and would criminalize valid and necessary political discussion, academic discourse, and free speech. In academic institutions that have codified the IHRA and its contemporary examples, they have been used to stifle student events, bar professors from campuses, and as a basis to rescind job offers to professors who have written papers critical of the Israeli government. The adoption of the IHRA definition is dangerous for any institution, and it is alarming that the state of Kansas could adopt legislation that would, as my Bubbe noted, would stifle academic discourse and critical inquiry. "It flies in the face of freedom of speech."

Moreover, the specification in HB299 that "wearing a mask" could be taken as antisemitism is astoundingly dangerous. It is well within your constituents' rights to attend protests, demonstrations, lectures, campus events, and any public space with a mask on. This legislation could threaten students' ability to protect themselves from health risks as well as their right to privacy and protest.

I would also like to include a Guest Commentary I wrote for the KC Star with help from my bubbe, in opposition to similar bills passing through the MO Legislature. I urge you to read it. I am attaching both a link and the text below:

<https://www.kansascity.com/opinion/readers-opinion/guest-commentary/article299302414.html#storylink=cpy>

Missouri leaders falsely confuse criticism of Israel's government with antisemitism | Opinion

Missouri's legislature is considering bills to conflate legitimate criticism of the Israeli government with antisemitism. They'd advance censorship, not safety.

For over 15 months, thousands of Kansas Citians, including nearly 10,000 Palestinians, have watched devastation unfold in Gaza. Many, including those who have lost hundreds of family members, have tirelessly organized fundraisers, support for a life-saving ceasefire and release of all hostages, and phonebanks hundreds of days in a row to end U.S. complicity in these atrocities.

Alongside Palestinian community leaders and allies, Jewish organizers have been a consistent force in local movements for a ceasefire and Palestinian liberation and self-determination. We have stood together, including members of Jewish Voice for Peace, Rabbis for Ceasefire, and hundreds of concerned individuals statewide. Some of us mobilize because we witnessed the brutality of the occupation firsthand in Palestine. Some because our ancestors who survived the Holocaust raised us under the refrain "never again," and that legacy compels us to act now. We witness [scenes from Gaza](#) and cannot conscionably allow any government to enable or normalize them.

Like most Jews throughout time, our Judaism flourishes distinct from the modern nation state of Israel.

But now, Missouri is considering bills that would flatten this distinction. [HB746](#) and [HB937](#) would adopt a definition of antisemitism that has been widely criticized, [including by one its authors](#), as a dangerous conflation of antisemitism and criticism of Israel.

If adopted, Missouri educational institutions would be required to add this [IHRA definition](#) into codes of conduct as a basis for investigating suspected acts of antisemitism. Alarming, this includes so-called '[examples](#)' of antisemitism, most

involving criticism of the Israeli State. Under these bills, the discussion of Palestinians' lived experiences, academic findings critical of Israel, or even quotes from Israelis that condemn the Israeli Government could all be considered "prohibited conduct as it relates specifically to antisemitism." They could lead to student suspensions and loss of scholarships, faculty denial of tenure, loss of research funding or firing, and defunding student organizations. All while doing nothing to make Jewish communities safer, as the bills claim to do.

## **What's at Stake**

Codifying the IHRA definition is dangerous in multiple ways. For one, [as its author noted](#), adopting legal definitions for types of bigotry is extremely rare and dampens institutions' abilities to address uncommon instances of hate. Imagine defining a comprehensive list of examples of racism or homophobia. How could a state government account for every dynamic and often intersectional form of hate?

After adopting the IHRA definition, [Florida](#) and [Cornell](#) began tracking and banning course syllabi that were particularly critical of Israel. At the University of Minnesota, a Holocaust historian's job offer was [rescinded over his criticism of Israel](#). At NYU, Jewish professors were [barred from campus](#) for protesting the Israeli government's violence in Gaza. Across UK universities, [one study](#) found 40 cases of Israel-specific complaints, including threats of legal action and attempts to cancel events.

Missouri students and educators now fear that this language conflating anti-Zionism with antisemitism would contradict the bill's stated intent to reduce antisemitism and stifle student groups who want to speak freely in opposition to the state of Israel. Haidee's Jewish grandmother, who taught Middle Eastern history for over 50 years in Missouri, is one of them. "The bill would stifle academic discourse and critical inquiry," she says. "It flies in the face of freedom of speech."

In 2024, statewide educational institutions saw hundreds of students demonstrating non-violently against the killing, starvation, and displacement of millions of Palestinian people by Israel. With the goal of uplifting Palestinians' struggle for freedom, Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) chapters at UMKC and Mizzou work towards cross-cutting solidarity against all forms of hate. Through workshops, pamphlets, and campus discussions, Missouri SJP groups assert that holding the Israeli government accountable is necessary -- and cannot be used to antagonize Jewish people.

Despite this, student groups have repeatedly faced attempts to [vilify](#) and [shut down](#) their events through false accusations of antisemitism. With HB746/HB937 weaponized against them, student groups will not be able to conduct the necessary conversations, education, and advocacy work that academic institutions should cultivate. Palestinian students who have been directly impacted by Israeli violence will be heavily censored, silenced, and punished for simply speaking out about their lived experience.

Last May, Jewish organizers went to KC City Hall to oppose a similar resolution, alongside Palestinians, rabbis, and a packed house of concerned community members. For the first time in a five-month ceasefire campaign, one of us was singled

out for being Jewish, as an oppositional Christian Zionist pulled them aside and tried to convert them to Christianity. This is the absurdity the IHRA definition as cited in HB746 and HB937: it targets criticism of the Israeli government but *not* attempts to convert Jews from Judaism. The irony grows starker as we see main proponents of the IHRA definition [publicly defending Elon Musk's nazi salute](#) and introduce policy to [deport student activists](#).

This year will mark the decade anniversary of the deadly attack perpetrated by a neo-Nazi on KC's Jewish Community Center and Village Shalom. Jewish and Palestinian organizers will continue to work to build solidarity in the face of hate. It is appalling that our state legislature could conflate our activism against the violence and ethnic cleansing perpetrated by Israel with real, vicious antisemitism. This is not the time to lose sight of very real threats to Jewish communities statewide.

Multi-generational, multi-racial, interfaith organizing has taught us that dismantling hate is not a project of pigeon-holing individual identity groups. We do not need a policy regime that conflates criticism of state and military policy with hate; we need tangible action to identify and address instances of substantive hate in any and all forms.

As community members, we urge Missouri legislators to reject HB746 and HB937. Our free speech, and our lives, are at stake.

<https://www.kansascity.com/opinion/readers-opinion/guest-commentary/article299302414.html>

## **Signature**

Full Name (Typed): Haidee Clauer  
Date: 2/9/25

## Personal Information

Full Name: Amanda Culbertson

Organization (if applicable): n/a

Email Address: mandysculbertson@gmail.com

Phone Number (optional): 913-709-9515

## 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

**From:** [Ralph Earles](#)  
**To:** [House Education](#)  
**Subject:** HB 2299 Written only testimony- opposed  
**Date:** Monday, February 10, 2025 11:23:12 AM

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HB 2299 Written only testimony- opposed

This bill is an effort to encourage hatred of Palestinians. Just like pointing out ways to improve our own government is very patriotic so is pointing out ways to improve the government of Israel an act of respect and hope for a peaceful future in the Middle East. It must not be a crime in any democratic country to criticize the government of one's own or any other country. Both the Palestinian and the Israeli governments have missed opportunities for peace. We can help only if we respect both peoples and remember that criticizing a government is not the same thing as relegating a whole population to condemnation.

Ralph Earles  
1780 N300 RD  
Baldwin, KS 66006

**From:** [Ghassan Elkhatib](#)  
**To:** [House Education](#)  
**Subject:** HB 2299 - Opponent - Written-Only  
**Date:** Sunday, February 9, 2025 3:07:00 PM

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I oppose HB2299  
Has nothing to do with protecting Jewish Religion or.

Speaking against zionism is not antisemitic.

If everything is antisemitic then nothing is antisemitic.

Ghassan Elkhatib  
5828 Lakecrest Dr, Shawnee, KS 66218



**From:** [andy@ernstein.com](mailto:andy@ernstein.com)  
**To:** [House Education](#)  
**Subject:** Written Only Testimony for HOUSE BILL No. 2299  
**Date:** Monday, February 10, 2025 9:15:58 AM

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Thank you for considering House Bill No. 2299 that prohibits our public schools from engaging in antisemitism including specific and enforceable penalties for doing so.

I am a Proponent of House Bill No. 2299.

I am concerned for the safety of my family and Jewish community given the significant increase in antisemitic rhetoric and violent incidents across our country in recent years and particularly since October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023. I hope that this bill – with its IHRA definition of antisemitism and specific authorization of the attorney general to investigate and penalize violations - will be a meaningful step to controlling and reversing this hateful and violent trend.

Sincerely,

Andrew Ernstein  
Overland Park, KS 66212

**From:** [Dylan Gardner](#)  
**To:** [House Education](#); [Michelle Sims](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: HB-2299 ~ Written Testimony  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 12, 2025 1:17:57 PM

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I am sorry-  
I oppose this bill HB-2299.  
Written testimony only.

As an Israeli, as a Kansan, as a Jew I criticize my own government- Why silence others? This bill takes my voice away The Tora is not silent of what is right or wrong, so why should we be? Just because Israel is “silent” doesn’t mean we have to be, just because they did something that is hard to swallow for the world. But Jews we have swallowed it before in the 1930’s and centuries past. Israel is a modern country with a modern govt not representing the Jewish ideals or morals according to Talmud, Tora, and so on and so forth, and it does transcend across all cultures and across all lines of take that killing is wrong, violence is wrong. It’s called Tikkun Olam {repair of the world} and if we cannot even begin to speak about the tragedy how will we ever solve it. How will Palestinians be repaired? How will Israelis be repaired? How will Jews be repaired? Definately by not squashing the Palestinian group under the toes of silence, that’s unjust, that’s how they go extinct. That’s how 6 million Jews died in the holocaust. That’s how Sudanese children are dying. And that’s why Jewish children are confused. This bill doesn’t represent Jews, or Israelis living in America, it only expressed the sheer influence a paliamment thousands of miles away has influenced your governing choices. In Israel we don’t like him, he forced us 7 elections to give in to his will of gennocide. Aren’t people in office human? And aren’t humans prone to wrong doing? So if they’re bound to commit mistakes and wrong doings, is it so bad to call checks and balances anymore, and to the world stage if that? To the leaders that “run” us and the billionaires who take too much??? From our state and our state’s people, now they want to bribe you into taking our voices, the voices of your neighbours, your loved ones, your children. Where would our water be if we didn’t speak up against it {all dry}. WE WOULD BE THIRSTY if we were disabled our tongue. #neveragain or Never again {holocaust phrase from Jewish people} it means NEVER AGAIN. It means STOP bills like this from happening. STOP control of the voice. Kansas is supposed to be the “free-state”? Act like it! In Kansas we like SMALL gov, BIG people. What happened???? Have we lost our path on the yellow brick road? Humans eb & flow, we grow & change. But if you sell this state out to bills like these and billionaires like that, you’ll see our once fertile fields will become nothing more than sand and nothingness, a barren wasteland of waste, and leftover when we all couldn’t speak anymore.

----- הודעה שהועברה -----  
<House Education <[H.Education@house.ks.gov](mailto:H.Education@house.ks.gov) :מאת  
תאריך: יום ב', 10 בפבר' 2025 ב-10:13  
נושא: RE: HB-2299 ~ Written Testimony  
אל: <[dylnadargardner@gmail.com](mailto:dylnadargardner@gmail.com)>

Please resubmit your testimony and indicate Proponent, Opponent, Neutral. Also please indicate whether your testimony is Written Only, In person or Virtual. If it is virtual, I will send a link to the meeting.

If I can be of any further assistance, please contact me at your convenience.

Michelle Sims

Committee Assistant

Representative Susan Estes

Kansas State House, Room 286 N

[Michelle.sims@house.ks.gov](mailto:Michelle.sims@house.ks.gov)

785 296-7388

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**From:** Dylan Gardner <[dylnadargardner@gmail.com](mailto:dylnadargardner@gmail.com)>

**Sent:** Monday, February 10, 2025 8:33 AM

**To:** House Education <[H.Education@house.ks.gov](mailto:H.Education@house.ks.gov)>

**Subject:** HB-2299 ~ Written Testimony

As an Israeli, as a Kansan, as a Jew I criticize my own government- Why silence others? This bill takes my voice away The Tora is not silent of what is right or wrong, so why should we be? Just because Israel is “silent” doesn’t mean we have to be, just because they did something that is hard to swallow for the world. But Jews we have swallowed it before in the 1930’s and centuries past. Israel is a modern country with a modern govt not representing the Jewish ideals or morals according to Talmud, Tora, and so on and so forth, and it does transcend across all cultures and across all lines of take that killing is wrong, violence is wrong. It’s called Tikkun Olam {repair of the world} and if we cannot even begin to speak about the tragedy how will we ever solve it. How will Palestinians be repaired? How will Israelis be repaired? How will Jews be repaired? Definately by not squashing the Palestinian group under the toes of silence, that’s unjust, that’s how they go extinct. That’s how 6 million Jews died in the holocaust. That’s how Sudanese children are dying. And that’s why Jewish children are confused. This bill doesn’t represent Jews, or Israelis living in America, it only expressed the sheer influence a paliament thousands of miles away has influenced your governing choices. In Israel we don’t like him, he forced us 7 elections to give in to his will of gennocide. Aren’t people in office human? And aren’t humans prone to wrong doing? So if they’re bound to commit mistakes and wrong doings, is it so bad to call checks and balances anymore, and to the world stage if that? To the leaders that “run” us and the billionaires who take too much??? From our state and our state’s people, now they want to bribe you into taking our voices, the voices of your neighbours, your loved ones, your children. Where would our water be if we didn’t speak up against it {all dry}. WE WOULD BE THIRSTY if we were disabled our tongue. #neveragain or Never again {holocaust phrase from Jewish people} it means NEVER AGAIN. It means STOP bills like this from happening. STOP control of the voice. Kansas is

supposed to be the “free-state”? Act like it! In Kansas we like SMALL gov, BIG people. What happened???? Have we lost our path on the yellow brick road? Humans eb & flow, we grow & change. But if you sell this state out to bills like these and billionaires like that, you’ll see our once fertile fields will become nothing more than sand and nothingness, a barren wasteland of waste, and leftover when we all couldn’t speak anymore.

Have a blessed day.

D.G.

Full Name: Nico Ashton Garner  
Email Address: ngarner1830@gmail.com

Bill Number: HB 2299  
Position: Opponent  
Date of Hearing: Tuesday, February 11, 2025, 1:30 PM

I am writing this testimony to oppose HB 2299, firstly because I believe it is suspicious of the state to include masks as a basis for unlawfulness, even if it is said to pertain specifically to antisemitism. Considering we are still not recovered from Covid, and prominent illness continues to rise in many forms, and our air quality lowers, I think it is dangerous to create a bias of suspicious behavior surrounding masks in schools and places of employment. Second, it doesn't seem logical to state that all forms of discrimination are unlawful, including discrimination towards religion, and then also add on the illegality of antisemitism if you won't also put in specifics that zionism is a form of discrimination. You claim that this bill is being proposed in the hope of creating a culture of equity and acceptance for all people, but somehow the conversation in Kansas and outside of it never includes antisemitism and zionism in the same sentence. I remember that in 2023, close to the time of the Hamas led October 7th attack on Israel, and the bombardment and genocide of Gaza and the West Bank by Israel, our very own KU upper management completely ignored it's Arab, Muslim, and Palestinian students as well as their Jewish allies seeking support in their goal of educating the campus and protesting for liberation and a right to self determination for all; and then the University hosted an Israeli speaker to talk about his fear towards the October 7th attack. I was there protesting for the students who were completely blindsided by this and who's comfort was diminished, and I saw almost every single person who walked into the conference room, to listen to the speaker, wearing an "I stand with Israel" sticker. With all of the tension and fear being elevated during that time for the students with ties to either or both sides, and the death and horror being witnessed daily on the news and social media, would that not be considered zionism, or even discrimination? I don't remember anyone talking about that. It's exhausting seeing the policing of education and I can guarantee this bill will just further the weaponization of the word 'antisemitism' to erase the pain caused by zionism. I think it's effective to create spaces that do not tolerate discrimination, but Kansas hasn't exactly taken a stand to do that for everyone. One of the contemporary examples of antisemitism published by the Holocaust Remembrance Alliance is "denying the Jewish population their right to self determination, ex: by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor. I think it's discriminatory and tone deaf to reiterate the fact that Israelis have the right to self determination, while the population residing in the West Bank does not have the same privileges and is victim to segregation and racism, and the Gaza Strip has never known the same rights and has not even been allowed an actual governance over itself. Let me be clear: I think any form of discrimination is awful and should be protested, and I am not arguing that our Jewish population should be hated or accused of reflecting the policies of Israel. I am saying that if you truly want equality and empathy for all, you must start by creating policies that acknowledge our populations multifaceted struggles, and uplift the cultures that are actively being ignored while making it clear you encompass

everyone's concerns. While you may feel this bill will protect our most vulnerable, its language and enforcement will create discomfort and uneasiness, and will continue to overlook the root problems we are facing.

Nico Ashton Garner

Date: 02/08/2025



**Testimony Submission - Kansas House Bill 2299**

**Subject: HB 2299 - Opponent - Written-Only Testimony**

**Personal Information**

Full Name: Sharon Goldberg

Email Address: [shari21gold@yahoo.com](mailto:shari21gold@yahoo.com)

**Bill Information**

Bill Number: HB 2299

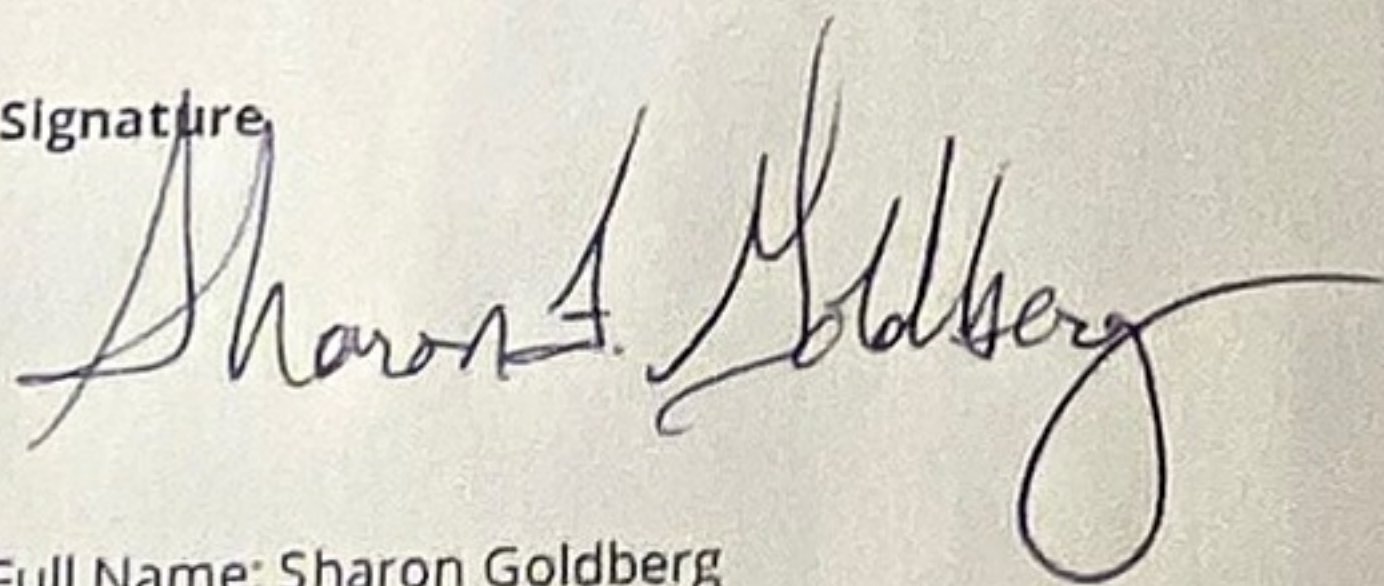
Position: Opponent

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

**Written Testimony**

This is a threat to Free Speech. This bill is not fighting real antisemitism.

**Signature**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sharon Goldberg". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping "G" at the end.

Full Name: Sharon Goldberg  
Date: 2/9/2025



**From:** [Cari Gunderman](#)  
**To:** [House Education](#); [Ethan Corson](#); [Jerry Stogsdill](#)  
**Subject:** HB 2299 - Opponent - Written-Only Testimony  
**Date:** Sunday, February 9, 2025 7:37:54 PM

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Full Name: Caryleen Gunderman

Email Address: [gundermancari@gmail.com](mailto:gundermancari@gmail.com)

Phone Number: 913-406-4982

Bill Number: HB 2299

Position: Opponent

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

**Written Testimony**

HB 2299 is not about anti-semitism. It is about the continuance of silencing Pro-Palestinian voices, and continues in the tradition of "unwavering" support of Israel. This bill is dangerous to our freedom of speech and is about criminalizing voices that are against perpetual Israeli violence, not anti Jewish voices. Stop using our tax dollars to silence us and to fund a genocide. The history of the decades of murder and destruction to Gaza and the Palestinian people is nothing short of genocide and is nowhere close to antisemitism.

I oppose this bill and urge you to vote against it.

Sincerely a concerned Kansan,

**Caryleen M. Gunderman**

913-406-4982 | [gundermancari@gmail.com](mailto:gundermancari@gmail.com)



**From:** [Paul Gunderman](#)  
**To:** [House Education](#); [Ethan Corson](#); [Jerry Stogsdill](#)  
**Subject:** HB 2299 - Opponent - Written-Only Testimony  
**Date:** Sunday, February 9, 2025 8:12:55 PM

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Full Name: Paul Gunderman

Email Address: [pgunderman12@gmail.com](mailto:pgunderman12@gmail.com)

Phone Number: 913-237-0292

Bill Number: HB 2299

Position: Opponent

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

**Written Testimony**

HB2299 is another example of our politicians putting the interest of a foreign government (Israel) over freedom of speech for the US taxpayer. What Israel has done in the last many months, with full U.S. support, is and absolutely never will be in my interest as a taxpayer. Our forced support for an overwhelmingly radical Israel should most definitely be open to as much conversation as possible, not the other way around. What the US has enabled Israel to do is disgusting, and opposition to this should not be confused with antisemitism.

Vote no on this bill!

Sincerely a concerned Kansan,

**Paul C. Gunderman**

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# Legislative Testimony

In **Opposition** to HB2299  
House Committee on Education  
February 11<sup>th</sup> , 2025

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## *In person Testimony*

Chair Estes and members of the committee,

My name is Rashane Hamby, and I serve as the Director of Policy and Research at the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Kansas. The ACLU of Kansas is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization with more than 35,000 supporters statewide, dedicated to protecting and advancing the civil rights and liberties of all Kansans. I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB 2299, HB 2299 represents a direct threat to free speech, academic freedom, and equal protection under the law. While combating antisemitism is a necessary and worthy goal, this bill misuses the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism in a way that suppresses legitimate political discourse about Israel, weakens protections against racial discrimination, and expands state surveillance over academic institutions. This legislation follows a disturbing national trend of weaponizing allegations of antisemitism to stifle criticism of Israel and control public discourse. At the national level, executive power has been used to police speech in universities, censor racial justice movements, and undermine anti-discrimination laws (ACLU, 2021). HB 2299 replicates this playbook at the state level, creating an unequal legal framework that uses valid concerns about combating rising antisemitism as cover for attacks on protected First Amendment.

## **Weaponizing Antisemitism to Suppress Free Speech**

At the heart of HB 2299 is its reliance on the IHRA definition of antisemitism, which has been widely criticized for conflating legitimate criticism of Israel with antisemitism (Stern, 2019). While antisemitism must be condemned in all forms, this bill is not about protecting Jewish communities—it is about silencing dissent.

- Academics, students, and activists could face investigation and penalties for statements such as "Israel's policies are oppressive" or "Palestinians deserve equal rights," if interpreted as "denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination" (IHRA, 2016).
- Educators and students will self-censor, avoiding necessary discussions on human rights, colonialism, and foreign policy for fear of legal repercussions.

Even Kenneth Stern, the lead drafter of the IHRA definition, has opposed its legal enforcement, stating that it was never meant to be used as a tool for criminalizing political speech (Stern, 2019). This effort to police discourse reflects the Trump administration's 2019 Executive Order on Combating Antisemitism, which used the IHRA definition to threaten federal funding for universities that allowed campus activism critical of Israeli policies (White House, 2019). HB 2299 continues this effort at the state level, turning Kansas classrooms into battlegrounds for

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Overland Park, KS 66282



# Legislative Testimony

In **Opposition** to HB2299  
House Committee on Education  
February 11<sup>th</sup> , 2025

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ideological control. This bill invites serious constitutional concerns because of its explicit attempts to limit, police, and punish protected First Amendment speech.

## **Increased Power of the Attorney General: State Overreach and Selective Enforcement**

HB 2299 grants the Kansas Attorney General sweeping new powers to investigate, subpoena, and punish schools and universities for perceived violations of its vague antisemitism provisions. This raises serious concerns about government overreach, political censorship, and selective enforcement.

- The Attorney General could subpoena individuals, demand testimony under oath, and conduct politically motivated investigations into academic institutions.
- This law opens the door to selective prosecution, where speech critical of Israel is punished while other discriminatory practices—including racial discrimination—are ignored.

## **Financial Penalties on Schools: Defunding Education Through Censorship**

HB 2299 imposes severe financial penalties on schools, punishing institutions for allowing discussions that lawmakers deem inappropriate.

- **Public schools and universities could be fined up to \$10,000 per violation, diverting resources from education into compliance costs and legal defenses.**
- **Schools already struggling with funding disparities—especially those serving Black and Latino students—will be disproportionately impacted.**
- **Taxpayer dollars will be wasted defending vague and politically motivated lawsuits rather than improving public education.**

## **Impact on Academic Freedom and Curriculum: Censorship in the Classroom**

HB 2299 lacks clear definitions regarding what constitutes antisemitic content in education, leaving room for arbitrary enforcement.

- Educators may feel pressured to avoid discussing Middle Eastern politics, world religions, or historical events that could be considered controversial.
- Universities could cancel guest speakers, student events, or academic panels to avoid legal risks.
- Research on Middle Eastern affairs, colonialism, and human rights may be restricted, limiting intellectual diversity and critical thought.

# Legislative Testimony

In **Opposition** to HB2299  
House Committee on Education  
February 11<sup>th</sup> , 2025

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This bill is not about combating hate—it is about restricting knowledge. HB 2299 is a continuation of this effort to turn education into a battleground for ideological control.

## **Potential for Political Weaponization: Encouraging Frivolous Complaints**

HB 2299 allows individuals (or their parents) to file complaints, opening the door for politically motivated or frivolous accusations.

- Complaints could be weaponized to silence students and faculty engaging in legitimate political discourse.
- Lawsuits and investigations will disproportionately target Black-led advocacy groups, student activists, and faculty of color who are already more vulnerable to institutional scrutiny.
- Schools may preemptively censor discussions to avoid controversy, further eroding free speech.

## **Conclusion**

HB 2299 is not a genuine effort to combat discrimination—it is a political tool designed to silence free speech, weaken racial discrimination protections, and expand state control over education. HB 2299 uses censorship, financial penalties, and government overreach to police discourse in Kansas classrooms. For these reasons, the ACLU of Kansas strongly opposes HB 2299 and urges the Kansas Legislature to reject this dangerous bill.

Kansas must stand for free speech, equal protection, and academic freedom—not government censorship.

Rashane Hamby

Director of Policy and Research

## **References**

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**[www.aclukansas.org](http://www.aclukansas.org)**  
913-490-4100  
Post Office Box 13048  
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# Legislative Testimony

In **Opposition** to HB2299  
House Committee on Education  
February 11<sup>th</sup> , 2025

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**From:** [Jack Hawthorn](#)  
**To:** [House Education](#)  
**Subject:** HB 2299  
**Date:** Saturday, February 8, 2025 10:16:07 AM

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To whom it may concern,  
I am a Kansan reaching out to express my concern about HB 2299.

This is a clear attempt to promote an anti-palestinian Palestinian agenda under the guise of "protecting" a vulnerable community. The vast majority of Jewish folks, my family included, do not support or agree with bills like this or defining anti-Israel sentiment as antisemitic. What is antisemitic is the false assertion that all Jewish people are Zionists.

In addition, not allowing masks will endanger the lives of disabled and immunocompromised students and teachers.

Once again, propose something that will help Kansans instead of perpetually attacking us. Elections will come eventually, and some of us will still be able to vote regardless of certain efforts.

Best,  
Jack

February 9, 2025

Dear Chairman and Members of the Committee,

I am a Kansas voter submitting written testimony in opposition HB 2299.

As a Jewish senior citizen, who is two or fewer generations away from the part of my family that was decimated by the Holocaust, I've always asked myself how people stood by and let the unspeakable happen.

It should not be controversial to say Palestinians deserve safety, clean water, food, medical care, to live in their homes, and to have full rights and freedoms in the land where their families have lived for generations.

HB 2299 does nothing to fight antisemitism; instead, it criminalizes wholly justified criticism of Israel.

Sincerely,

M Horowitz

TO: House Education Committee: h.education@house.ks.gov

FROM: Lora Jost: jostlora@gmail.com

WRITTEN PUBLIC TESTIMONY (written only)

Bill Number: HB 2299

Position: Opponent

Date of hearing: Feb. 11, 2025

Dear House Education Committee,

Please oppose HB2299. This bill would require public schools across Kansas, including some universities, to adopt a definition of antisemitism that has been widely discredited and in fact many view this definition itself as antisemitic. This definition has been discredited because it equates any criticism of the government of Israel with antisemitism. Of course, no government should be above criticism. Thus, adopting this bill will infringe on people's right to free speech and will paint people who are NOT antisemitic as antisemitic, and this is wrong.

Sincerely,

Lora Jost

Feb. 9, 2025



**Full Name:** Lauren Kimball

**E-mail Address:** [LaurenKimballArt@gmail.com](mailto:LaurenKimballArt@gmail.com)

**Bill Number:** HB 2299

**Position:** Opponent

**Date of Hearing:** Tuesday, February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Good afternoon, my name is Lauren Kimball, and I am both a college professor and a constituent of Johnson County, Kansas.

I want to begin by letting you know that I am fiercely protective of all my students, regardless of their age, ethnicity, religion, race, gender identity, or political orientation and stand firmly against anyone who would discriminate against any of them based on their identities.

Upon reviewing the language of this bill, it is clear to me that this legislation has less, if anything, to do with protecting individual rights than to intimidate and suppress the freedom of speech guaranteed to educators and students under the first amendment of our constitution.

On page 2, lines 21-27, this bill adopts the definition of antisemitism as defined by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition, a definition that, according to their own website, includes criticism that targets the state of Israel.

As a matter of personal principle, I do not teach nor express my politics in the classroom. However, as an art professor, I can attest to the deep empathy and compassion that is expressed by many of my students. Several of my students have been vocal about the crimes against humanity that have been perpetrated upon the civilians in Gaza, actions that have been condemned by the International Criminal Court as human rights violations including the indiscriminate bombing of hospitals, schools, and refugee camps.

Their opposition has nothing to do with slandering religions or ethnicities, and everything to do with their tender hearts, compassion, and desire to change the world for the better. Several of these students are themselves Jewish and are compelled by their faith in God to speak out against atrocity no matter who perpetrates it.

Am I to believe that the state of Kansas will charge Jewish students with antisemitism for speaking out against war crimes by a foreign nation, simply because that nation-state identifies as Jewish? With that logic, will you be charging students with discrimination for speaking out against human rights violations perpetrated by Saudi Arabia or Afghanistan because those countries identify as Muslim? Why are we legislating protections for foreign countries against American citizens?

Artists carry on a timeless legacy of speaking truth to power through their work – of capturing and expressing the hope, pain, grief, love, and lived experiences of history through their visual narratives and artistic expression. In these United States, we teach our children that the legacy of our nation is defined by liberty and justice for all – yet there can be no liberty where freedom of speech is suppressed, and there is no justice where our youth are silenced from speaking out against injustice.

I thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Lauren Kimball

Associate Professor of Animation