

Proponent of AB 446**David Soffer****Combat Antisemitism Movement (CAM)**

Good afternoon, Chair Swearingen and esteemed Members of the Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Assembly Bill 446. My name is David Soffer, and I am here today representing the Combat Antisemitism Movement (CAM), an American organization dedicated to fighting global antisemitism. I am proud to stand before you today to advocate for AB 446, a bill aimed at defining antisemitism by law, a step that has been taken by 37 individual states across the US and by our last three presidential administrations. I want to extend my gratitude to Representative Ron Tusler for championing this vital piece of legislation and for his strong leadership on this issue.

To underscore the severity of the situation, CAM's Antisemitism Research Center (ARC) documented an alarming 6,326 antisemitic incidents in 2024, a staggering 107.7% increase from 2023. When looking at the data in 2025, from January 1 to August 31st, there has been a 10% increase compared to the same time period last year. When looking solely at U.S. college campuses, the ARC recorded a 300% increase compared to 2022. Additionally, a recent CAM survey revealed that 3.5 million American Jews have experienced antisemitism since October 7, including 380,000 Jewish children.

Since the October 7 attacks, there has been a disturbing surge in antisemitic activity across the United States, putting the safety of Jewish students and the broader Jewish community at risk. Our K-12 schools, as well as college and university campuses, have become increasingly hostile environments, with incidents including physical harassment, intimidation, and even violence. Jewish students and faculty have faced threats, bodily harm, and have been blocked from entering certain campus areas, contributing to an atmosphere of fear and division. Wisconsin is no stranger to this, as you will hear from proponent testimony.

So how do we combat antisemitism? The first step must be to define what it is you are seeking to combat. AB 446 uses the IHRA working definition for antisemitism and its illustrative examples. The IHRA definition is the most authoritative and recognized definition of antisemitism, endorsed by every major Jewish organization in America and has been adopted thus far by 37 U.S. states, by multiple Presidential Executive Orders, utilized non-controversially by the U.S. Department of State for more than a decade, as well enacted by 42 other countries, and over a thousand other institutions. The IHRA definition and its examples are on a short list of policy items that Presidents Obama, Biden, and Trump all agree, utilizing it as a key tool in combatting antisemitism for each of these administrations.

The IHRA definition is a clear, concise, and vital resource to determine manifestations of antisemitism in all its forms. Critically, in the post-October 7 landscape of antisemitism in the U.S., the IHRA Definition's examples encompass traditional anti-Jewish hatred as well as Holocaust denial and outsized criticism of the State of Israel based on its Jewish foundations

and character. State institutions should have clear guidance to investigate instances in which anti-Israel activity becomes unlawful and discriminatory to Jewish students on campus. Let's also address what this bill doesn't do. AB 446 does not infringe on First Amendment rights. We know this because it has survived legal challenges in other states and because the explicit language of the bill clearly states, "Nothing in this section may be construed to diminish or infringe upon any right protected under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution or to conflict with federal or state antidiscrimination laws."

The goal of the definition is to help identify when speech turns to antisemitic conduct, something the Supreme Court has long ruled is not protected speech. For instance, a student group in Wisconsin posted the following: "ANY organization or entity that supports Israel is not welcome at UWM. Any organization that has not separated itself from Israel will be treated accordingly as extremist criminals. Stay tuned." To then follow that with repeated harassment of students on campus and vandalism of Jewish buildings is a sign of antisemitic conduct of speech turned into unlawful action.

Further, the bill does not prevent criticism of Israel. The IHRA definition explicitly says as much. What it requires is that Israel be held to the same standard as every other country. Why is this important? Consider the events from this past week. As many people in this room know, there is a constant drumbeat on campus about how Israel is intentionally killing innocent Palestinians, a genocide they say. But now that Hamas has retaken control in Gaza, and has openly engaged in public executions on the streets. Where is the outrage?

In conclusion, AB 446 will make a difference in combating antisemitism. The bill will help identify what is and, importantly, what is not considered antisemitism and help provide a guide to state institutions to understand best what actions should be treated as antisemitic driven activity. The time has come to listen to the vast majority of the Jewish community that is asking you to solve this problem. Thank you.