

Comments in Support of Int. 0001, 0022, 0165, 0175, 0297, 0327, and 0388

Good evening, Speaker Menin, Chair Salaam, and City Councilmembers,

My name is Lisa Katz. I am the Chief Government Affairs Officer of the Combat Antisemitism Movement (CAM), and I'm also a former elected councilwoman and town supervisor with a decade of public service. I appreciate the opportunity to submit these remarks in support of the Council's work.

Through CAM, I work with mayors, councilmembers, law enforcement, and community partners across North America on practical public-safety and policy tools to address antisemitism and hate. From that work, I can say clearly: cities that confront hate most effectively do not rely on rhetoric alone. They build coordinated systems that prevent harm, support safe access to civic life, improve preparedness, and deliver transparency and accountability when incidents occur. That is why CAM strongly supports this package of bills, and why we are encouraged to see New York City advancing measures that other cities have pursued in similar form to strengthen prevention and response.

Antisemitism in New York City is a public safety issue, a civil rights issue, and a test of whether government will act before harm escalates. Of course, people have a right to protest and express their views, even views we find offensive, ignorant, or misguided. That is the strength of our democracy. But no one should have to weigh their physical safety against learning or worshipping. No parent should have to hesitate at a school door. No elder should have to brace themselves before walking into a house of worship. And when Jewish New Yorkers must calculate risk just to pray, bring a child to school, or report an incident, that is not only a Jewish problem. It is a public safety failure for all New Yorkers.

No community should have to normalize fear, rising security costs, and constant vigilance around places that should be safe and sacred. And when government does not respond with clarity and seriousness, the harm extends beyond one community: trust erodes, extremists are emboldened, and the shared sense of belonging that cities depend on is weakened.

This is not abstract. In January 2026, the NYPD reported that anti-Jewish hate crimes increased 182% year over year and accounted for the majority of all hate crime incidents that month. This is precisely the kind of moment that calls for serious governance with measures that strengthen prevention and readiness, improve reporting and transparency, and ensure that communities can access help and accountability when hate occurs.

That is why these bills matter. They are not symbolic. They address how antisemitism, and all forms of hate, actually show up: at houses of worship, in schools, online, and in the gaps that still exist in reporting, emergency planning, coordination, and follow-through. Taken together, this

package combines prevention, preparedness, transparency, and accountability, which are exactly what serious municipal governance requires.

Importantly, while these measures are urgently needed in response to rising antisemitism, they will also strengthen the City's response to hate in all its forms. Stronger systems to prevent and respond to antisemitism also protect New Yorkers targeted because of race, religion, ethnicity, identity, or any other protected characteristic. A city that builds stronger infrastructure to protect one community builds stronger infrastructure to protect all communities.

I also want to address a concern raised by some critics: that these measures infringe free speech. They do not. They do not silence anyone or prevent lawful assembly. They protect safe access, reduce the risk of intimidation, and strengthen preparedness. The Constitution permits content-neutral time, place, and manner restrictions that serve significant public-safety interests, are narrowly tailored, and leave open alternative channels for expression. Properly drafted and enforced, these measures regulate where intimidation can occur, and not what people may believe or say.

With that in mind, I respectfully request a specific improvement to the revised perimeter legislation in Intro 1A and 175A. While I strongly support the package overall, I disagree with the changes made allowing buffer-zone protections to be left to NYPD determination on an ad hoc basis. In First Amendment contexts, clear, objective rules are legally stronger and fairer than standardless discretion. This Council should set a neutral, consistent baseline that protects safe access while preserving lawful expression. Leaving protections to ad hoc determinations risks inconsistency and undermines the clarity communities need to feel protected.

I urge the Council to restore the specific requirement for a minimum 100-foot buffer zone in the relevant perimeter provisions. A 100-foot buffer does not ban speech or target any viewpoint. It sets a reasonable boundary to help ensure that people can enter and leave houses of worship and schools safely, practice their faith and learn without intimidation, and gather in peace. Put simply: no New Yorker should have to run a gauntlet to pray.

And we should be clear: people entering houses of worship have First Amendment rights to the free exercise of religion. Too often, public debate focuses only on speech and skips over the right to worship. The First Amendment protects both. A buffer zone around houses of worship protects all faiths helping ensure that every New Yorker can practice their faith free from harassment, intimidation, and bullying.

This public-safety principle is reflected in *Burson v. Freeman*, where the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a 100-foot buffer around polling places to prevent intimidation and protect safe access. Polling places are a different legal context, but the core principle is directly relevant here: government may adopt narrowly tailored, location-based protections to prevent intimidation and

ensure safe access to sensitive civic spaces. New York City should not wait for a confrontation or tragedy to prove the value of a clear perimeter.

For all of these reasons, I respectfully urge you to advance and adopt this entire package of bills, and to restore the 100-foot buffer zone protection in the perimeter legislation.

Thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to submit these remarks.