



## Statement Following Public Action at the 10th Hearing of the Massachusetts Special Commission on Combatting Antisemitism

August 11, 2025

[Together for an Inclusive Massachusetts](#) (TIM) believes in the humanity of all people. We must fight all forms of oppression and hate through a solidarity framework. We reiterate our shared commitment to addressing antisemitism in the Commonwealth, however the Commission's stated good intentions alone do not make good policy.

On Thursday, August 7, 2025, at the 10th meeting of the Special Commission on Combating Antisemitism, a representative for Together for an Inclusive Massachusetts read a brief excerpt from our [statement to the Commission urging them to delay their vote](#) on their [flawed K-12 recommendations](#), while other members of the public held signs reading "Delay the Vote."

**We took this action after 10 months of discriminatory exclusion from the Commission's one-sided and undemocratic process:**

- TIM [presented testimony](#) to the Commission on February 10, 2025, outlining our concerns about their process and their one-sided approach to issues of free speech and students' right to fact-based education on Israel/Palestine. The Commission co-chairs as well as other members resorted to character defamation to avoid engaging us on the policy recommendations and evidence presented by our coalition, which we published publicly for anyone to judge independently.
- TIM offered a [detailed report outlining the documented legal, factual, and ethical problems](#) with the K-12 recommendations to the Commission, **none of which were meaningfully addressed** in the revised recommendations. Instead, our legitimate concerns about infringement of free speech, academic freedom, and religious freedom, including the rights of Massachusetts' Jewish residents, were referred to as "pseudo intellectual debates over semantics."
- Members of TIM and the broader public gave hours of public comment to the Commission on [April 7, 2025](#) (in addition to hours of [public comment](#) on the separate IHRA bill, H. 1763) expressing grave concerns about the discriminatory implementation of the IHRA definition of antisemitism in practice, **none of which appears to have influenced the Commission's final recommendations.**



- More than 2,000 Massachusetts constituents sent letters to the legislature requesting the Commission delay their vote until the Commission was willing to substantively engage with the public and consider expert concerns on their recommendations, particularly regarding their understanding of the IHRA definition. **None of these emails from the public were heeded.**

Commission members continue to state that they are listening and responding to public input. They maintain that these recommendations offer meaningful protections for free speech and academic freedom. Saying this does not make it true, and ignores precedent in Massachusetts, nationally, and internationally on the IHRA definition's discriminatory application.

The IHRA definition, which is repeatedly referenced in the Commission's recommendations, is controversial and many experts say it violates the First Amendment. **While it is supported by the Trump administration, the ADL, the JCRC, and the AJC, it is strongly opposed by:**

- [The ACLU](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), & [more than 100 Israeli and international civil society organizations](#)
- [Over 1300 Jewish educators represented by Concerned Jewish Faculty](#) & [scores of experts on antisemitism and Holocaust studies in the U.S., Israel, and around the world](#)
- One of the lead authors of IHRA, [Kenneth Stern, who has stated his objections to the ways it has been used to shut down speech about Israel](#)
- The Massachusetts legislature, which has repeatedly opposed codification of the IHRA definition of antisemitism as bad policy

In their testimony to the Judiciary Committee on H. 1763, the Council on American-Islamic Relations – Massachusetts (CAIR-MA) described the ways in which the IHRA definition is already causing harm to Massachusetts residents.

Since October 2023, [CAIR-MA's] clients report being sanctioned at work or where they live for the very same activities that H.1763 is aimed at. Almost all cases involve speech, most often social media posts, that takes place outside of the workplace. Broadly, our clients fall into three categories:

- Palestinians grieving the slaughter of their families and countrymen;
- Muslim professionals, especially in the healthcare field, who are engaged in humanitarian efforts, both in the U.S. as well as in Gaza, or who lament the destruction of the healthcare system in Gaza; and
- People of conscience – Jews, Christians, Muslims, members of other faiths, or those who do not subscribe to any religious faith – whose values compel them to speak out against the on-going carnage in Gaza. They rightfully believe that they have the same right to criticize a foreign nation as to criticize their own government.



These are Massachusetts residents who have already been harmed by the de facto adoption of the IHRA definition where they work or live. None of these people expressed bigoted or hateful opinions about Jews or Judaism (in one instance, a Palestinian family hung the Palestinian flag at their own home); instead, they spoke out on an issue of intense global interest – and paid a price for doing so.

Universities that have adopted the IHRA definition of antisemitism have seen the elimination of courses on the [Middle East](#), entire [departments of religious studies](#), and fears of discipline by [Jewish studies](#) and [Holocaust studies](#) scholars.

Our concerns are grounded in fact and have widespread Jewish support. It does not matter that the Commission co-chairs believe that this definition will not harm students and their families, faculty, and staff - Jewish and non-Jewish alike. The evidence, both locally and internationally, and expert opinion says that it will.

**There is another way.**

Together for an Inclusive Massachusetts reiterates our deep and unwavering commitment to equality and justice for all, including Jews and Palestinians. We believe that the Commonwealth can and must address antisemitism using an anti-racist, solidarity framework. We reject one-sided efforts to exclude Jewish people who are critical of Israel or to redefine antisemitism in a way that harms Palestinians.

**We are insisting that the Commission engage with its mandate thoughtfully, transparently, and inclusively.**