



**Together for an Inclusive Massachusetts and Concerned Jewish Faculty & Staff urge  
the Antisemitism Commission to Delay Vote on Flawed K-12 Education  
Recommendations; Demand Apology from Co-Chairs**

Together for an Inclusive Massachusetts (TIM) and Concerned Jewish Faculty and Staff - Boston (CJFS-B) call on the Special Commission on Combatting Antisemitism to delay its [August 7th](#) vote on the K-12 education recommendations. Due in part to the Commission's lack of transparency and exclusionary process, the flawed and partisan recommendations are unlikely to effectively address antisemitism and will undermine safe learning and working environments for students and teachers alike.

After the Commission released its initial draft K-12 findings and recommendations on July 2nd, TIM and CJFS-B separately sent detailed comments designed to help the Commission address several troubling flaws (see [TIM's](#) and [CJFS-B's](#) written testimony). Instead of incorporating any of our feedback – or otherwise inviting any meaningful engagement – the Commission released updated recommendations on August 4th that exacerbate our concerns. The revision added a purported “finding” that echoes Heritage Foundation and ADL talking points and engages in insults by describing one of our core concerns as a “pseudo-intellectual debate[] over semantics.”

We expect and deserve far better from our elected officials and state bodies.

From the outset, TIM and CJFS-B have urged the Commission to address antisemitism in a way that does not pit some Jewish students against other marginalized populations, including other Jewish students. The current K-12 education recommendations fail that critical test.

In the interest of students' well-being and access to comprehensive and inclusive education throughout the Commonwealth, the Special Commission must address several flaws before voting on the revised K-12 recommendations:

- (1) The revised recommendations reflect the views of a narrow set of invited speakers and exclude a diversity of Jewish and non-Jewish experts among others who testified at the only hearing that permitted public testimony.
- (2) The Special Commission has systematically excluded important testimony from non-Zionist Jewish academics with subject matter [expertise](#) on topics including antisemitism, Title VI, the Holocaust, and Jewish American history.
- (3) Members of the Special Commission have demeaned and dismissed individuals and organizations whose views on Israel/Palestine diverge from their own apparent political commitments.
- (4) Members of the Special Commission have publicly stated that they refrained from contributing to the full report because they lack K-12 education expertise—a fact that reinforces the need for the Commission to invite testimony from scholars and experts on K-12 policy and pedagogy before approving recommendations that will shape the educational experience for students and conditions for educators across the state.
- (5) The Commission’s lack of transparency and exclusionary practices do a disservice to state legislators and other state and local policy makers committed to thoughtfully addressing antisemitism in a way that is tailored to student learning and consistent with Massachusetts’ inclusionary values.
- (6) The Commission’s lack of transparency and exclusionary practices are atypical of state-created Commissions, particularly ones with this level of public interest. The legislature regularly creates Commissions to deliberate and debate key policy priorities that need a deeper dive to supplement the legislative committee process. Typically, Commissions bring a diversity of expertise and constituencies to publicly debate the issues, find consensus and identify areas of differences.
- (7) The Commission has not offered a [public comment](#) period to respond to its K-12 preliminary recommendations prior to a vote.
- (8) The Commission is relying on [misleading](#) and [discredited](#) data to justify fast tracking these recommendations. These are the same faulty statistics that ground the false and dangerous narratives the Trump administration now wields to [target our own students](#) and [destroy our universities](#).

- (9) The legislature created the Special Commission with a mandate to submit recommendations to the legislature. Instead, the Commission - **an unelected, non-representative body which was created exclusively to advise the state legislature** - intends to bypass the legislative process (and the public engagement it would necessitate) by submitting recommendations directly to local school districts, school committees, public and private school administrators and the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
- (10) The Commission's continued reliance on the IHRA definition, a partisan definition of antisemitism condemned by the ACLU and numerous Jewish and [Israeli Human Rights organizations](#), undermines genuine efforts at addressing antisemitism in schools. The IHRA definition contains many ambiguous terms concerning concepts highly contested within the Jewish community, and in practice will restrict critical academic engagement about the state of Israel. Use of the IHRA definition may paradoxically result in an increase in antisemitic sentiment by conflating Jewish identity and political orientation to Zionism or the state of Israel.

We agree with the [US National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism](#) which states:

*Antisemitism threatens not only the Jewish community, but all Americans. People who peddle these antisemitic conspiracy theories and fuel racial, ethnic, and religious hatred against Jews also target other communities—including Black and brown Americans; Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders; LGBTQI+ individuals; Muslim Americans; women and girls; and so many others. Our intelligence agencies have determined that domestic terrorism rooted in white supremacy—including antisemitism—is the greatest terrorist threat to our Homeland today.*

Instead, the Commission is rushing through recommendations that call for Massachusetts schools to employ a contentious and widely criticized definition of antisemitism that, where it is already in use, creates a chilling effect, undermines opportunities for critical thinking and opens the door to punish students and educators who engage in legitimate discourse about Israel/Palestine.

In the interest of the Commonwealth, its students, parents and educators, the Commission should not vote on K-12 recommendations until our well-documented concerns have been addressed. We have a vested interest in this Commission's success

in arriving at effective and comprehensive recommendations to address antisemitism in the Commonwealth and reiterate our interest in working with the Commission to achieve that goal.

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[Together for an Inclusive Massachusetts](#) (TIM) is a group of Jewish, Muslim, Arab, labor, education, student, civil rights and other organizations and individuals advocating for justice and equity in the Commonwealth led by Alliance for Water Justice in Palestine, Boston Workers Circle, Council on American-Islamic Relations – MA Chapter, If Not Now Boston, Jewish Voice for Peace Boston, Mass Peace Action, MTA Rank & File for Palestine, National Lawyers Guild – MA, Sawa: Newton-Area Alliance for Peace and Justice, Worcester Havurah and 29 other [supporting organizations](#).

[Concerned Jewish Faculty & Staff](#) (CJFS-B) is a membership organization of Jewish faculty and staff from colleges and universities in the Boston area. We represent a range of backgrounds and hold diverse views, but we are united in opposing the invocation of Jews and Jewishness – and misguided or cynical claims of antisemitism – to penalize Palestine solidarity activism, to stifle academic freedom, or to otherwise attack inclusionary commitments. We believe that Jewish safety is deeply connected to the safety of all people, and that the fight against antisemitism cannot be separated from the struggle against all forms of oppression.

For more information, please contact Together for an Inclusive Massachusetts at [inclusivemassachusetts.org](http://inclusivemassachusetts.org) or Concerned Jewish Faculty & Staff at [concernedjfaculty@gmail.com](mailto:concernedjfaculty@gmail.com).