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SPECIAL COMMISSION ON COMBATting ANTISEMITISM'S FLAWED & DISCRIMINATORY PROCESS RISKS INCREASING ANTISEMITISM

The Commission does not represent Massachusetts Jews

At its September 25th hearing, the Massachusetts Special Commission on Combatting Antisemitism offered the second opportunity for public comment in one year of hearings. More than sixty people - a majority of them Jewish - used this rare opportunity to warn that the Commission's process and recommendations are not only [misguided, but dangerous](#). The testimony exposed deep concerns on key themes:

Defining Antisemitism to Silence Political Speech about Israel/Palestine

The Commission's draft [recommendations](#) champion adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism. This definition conflates antisemitism with certain criticisms of the state of Israel. The MA legislature, [scores of experts](#), hundreds of [Holocaust and Genocide scholars](#) as well as overwhelming numbers of Massachusetts voters have publicly denounced adoption of this definition as infringing on free speech, silencing and potentially criminalizing such criticism.

The Commission Deliberately Discriminates Against a Significant Jewish Constituency

The Commission's curated testimony and responses to criticism indicate that it sees some Jews as worth protecting and others not. Its deliberations and recommendations ignore the experiences of Jewish Massachusetts residents who have reported harassment, intimidation, and doxxing for voicing Pro-Palestinian or anti-Zionist views, while sounding the alarm for those who speak of "feeling unsafe" when their political allegiance to Israel is challenged by phrases such as "Free Palestine." The Commission is ignoring warnings that its current approach will result in [harm](#) to [Jewish students](#).

The Commission has rejected many Jewish and non-Jewish scholars with expertise on Judaism, genocide, Holocaust studies and other topics. A single panel of experts who do not adhere to the Commission's world-view was given the platform after only extensive external pressure. They testified in good faith, then were [bullied and shouted](#) down.

The Commission Knowingly Uses Inaccurate Data

Despite public push-back, the Commission repeatedly relies on antisemitism statistics provided by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). The ADL counts advocacy and protests for Palestinian human rights as

“antisemitism.” An [analysis of ADL data](#) by *Jewish Currents* found “more than a thousand items we believe were misclassified as antisemitic ... [and] that the data included misapplications of the organization’s own standards.” The ADL’s own data breaks out that over half of the instances are [Israel-related](#).

It’s Part of a 50 State Strategy

While the Commission has repeatedly rejected parallels to the [Heritage Foundation’s Project Esther](#), its recommendations closely mirror policies that primarily [punish pro-Palestinian](#) advocacy or anti-Zionist narratives in schools, universities, the workplace and in hate crimes laws. The Commission advocates for policies similar to those recently [passed in California](#) and [Texas](#) as part of a [50-state strategy](#).

While the Trump administration uses immigration laws to suppress free speech, the Commission is moving to use state laws to achieve the same goals. The Commission should heed the rebuke of a recent [US District Court ruling](#) which called out the Trump administration’s abuse of power by weaponizing antisemitism to restrict free speech:

*It was never the Secretaries [of State and Department of Homeland Securities’] immediate intention to deport all pro-Palestinian non-citizens ... The intent of the Secretaries was more invidious -- to target a few for speaking out and then use the full rigor of the Immigration and Nationality Act (in ways it had never been used before) to have them publicly deported **with the goal of tamping down pro-Palestinian student protests and terrorizing similarly situated non-citizen (and other) pro-Palestinians into silence** because their views were unwelcome.*

*Footnoted: This gambit has been accompanied by **the Trump administration’s full-throated assault on the First Amendment across the board under the cover of an unconstitutionally broad definition of Anti-Semitism**. As it should, this Court confines itself to the facts proven herein and makes no further comment.¹*

The Commission Misrepresents Groups offering Constructive Criticism

Together for an Inclusive MA (TIM) continues to be troubled by the most vocal Commission members’ deliberate mischaracterization of our concerns, their false claim that we oppose addressing antisemitism altogether – an especially insulting allegation, given the many Jewish organizations represented by TIM – and their racially charged insinuations that pro-Palestinian voices are inherently antisemitic.

Antisemitism is real and deadly. Historically, it has always increased in times of instability and under authoritarian regimes. Together for an Inclusive MA recognizes the current danger, and we share the Commission’s stated goal to dismantle antisemitism and hate of all kinds. TIM calls for an approach to fighting antisemitism rooted in antiracism, pluralism, and solidarity, not one that further marginalizes and isolates Palestinians and Jews. We know that the best way to create safety for Jews is to work together, in [solidarity](#) with other marginalized groups and from an anti-racist framework, towards a vision of safety and freedom for everyone.

¹ American Association of University Professors v. Rubio, No. 1:25-cv-10685 (D.Mass), 25-1658 (1st Cir.)