



Together for an Inclusive Massachusetts' Policy Concerns and Recommendations for Countering Antisemitism in Massachusetts May 30, 2026

Together for an Inclusive Massachusetts (TIM) is a statewide coalition of more than 40 organizations working to ensure that local and state policies address antisemitism through an antiracist, solidarity framework.¹

On November 26th, 2025, the Special Commission on Combating Antisemitism (SCCA) released its final report. The report contains multiple assertions, findings and recommendations. Many of the SCCA's proposals are constructive and valuable, such as those that recommend anti-bias training, support for affected communities, and the use of restorative practices, as well as those that honor free speech and the great diversity of perspectives within the Jewish community. At the same time, several key recommendations are problematic and carry the risk of amplifying antisemitic as well as anti-Muslim, anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian attitudes. In this document we discuss six recommendations that have the potential to compromise Massachusetts' values, our use of best practices in public education, and our fundamental commitment to civil rights: (1) the promotion of the IHRA definition of antisemitism as a guiding framework; (2) expanded data sharing with state and federal law enforcement; (3) the creation of curriculum-reporting mechanisms in K–12 education; (4) the establishment of anonymous statewide K–12 bias reporting systems tied to law enforcement; (5) expanded bias-reporting systems in higher education; and (6) the prohibition of academic boycotts.

Our concerns reflect a shared commitment to combating antisemitism. In multiple cases, we endorse alternative policies already contained within the SCCA report itself. Our goal is to ensure that efforts to address antisemitism strengthen safety and inclusion without undermining civil liberties, educational integrity, or trust within our schools and communities.

¹ Together for an Inclusive Massachusetts, <https://inclusivemassachusetts.org/>

SCCA Recommendation: “Educators and other actors charged with implementing these recommendations should be informed of and by IHRA’s [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance] definition and its examples.”²

Concern: The IHRA is an unconstitutionally broad definition of antisemitism.³ For example, in a ruling on ICE’s abduction of Tufts graduate student Rümeysa Öztürk, a federal judge found that Trump administration policies utilized “a definition of antisemitism that encompassed protected political speech.”⁴ (President Trump made the IHRA federal policy in an executive order.⁵) Civil rights experts including Kenneth Stern, an original author of the IHRA definition, have reached similar conclusions, finding that this definition irreparably conflates criticism of Israel with antisemitism.⁶ Many GOP-led states are utilizing the IHRA as a political weapon; Massachusetts should not follow their lead.⁷

² Special Commission on Combating Antisemitism, Final Report, page 10 <<https://malegislature.gov/Commissions/Detail/646/Documents> >.

³ United States District Court, District of Massachusetts, American Association of University Professors v. Marco Rubio (Civil Action No. 25-10685-WGY), page 95 footnote 33 <https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.mad.282460/gov.uscourts.mad.282460.261.0_1.pdf >

⁴ United States District Court, District of Massachusetts, American Association of University Professors v. Marco Rubio (Civil Action No. 25-10685-WGY), page 128 (referencing Executive Order 13899) <https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.mad.282460/gov.uscourts.mad.282460.261.0_1.pdf >.

⁵ Executive Order 13899 <<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/12/16/2019-27217/combating-anti-semitism>>.

⁶ See: ACLU to the Secretary of Education, *Reject Definitions of Anti-Semitism that Encompass Protected Speech* <<https://www.aclu.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Reject-Definitions-of-Anti-Semitism-that-Encompass-Protected-Speech.pdf>>; ACLU of Massachusetts to BESE (“the IHRA definition has in practice been used to undermine the free expression rights of scholars”), <https://www.aclum.org/app/uploads/drupal/sites/default/files/aclum_letter_to_bese.pdf>; Center for Constitutional Rights, “Letter: Civil Rights Groups Demand DOE Reject IHRA Definition of Antisemitism” <<https://ccrjustice.org/letter-civil-rights-groups-demand-doe-reject-ihra-definition-antisemitism>>; “I drafted the definition of antisemitism. Rightwing Jews are weaponizing it.” <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/dec/13/antisemitism-executive-order-trump-chilling-effect>>

⁷ See for example: “How Mass. Democrats are unwittingly helping Trump,” <<https://www.masslive.com/opinion/2025/08/how-mass-democrats-are-unwittingly-helping-trump.html>>.

As the SCCA affirmed, “Measures to combat antisemitism and hatred of Jewish people must respect and protect the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment.”⁸ The IHRA definition does not meet this standard and must be discarded. Notably, the SCCA affirmed the existence of other valid definitions,⁹ including the Nexus Document¹⁰ and the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism, which experts developed to address the problems of the IHRA.¹¹

Solution: The Commonwealth should (1) cease to utilize and/or promote the IHRA definition; (2) affirm that multiple valid definitions of antisemitism exist; and (3) recommend the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism and the Nexus Document when specific resources must be named.

Public Safety and Law Enforcement Recommendations, VI.c.1

SCCA Recommendation: *“EOPSS should encourage local law enforcement agencies to report all instances of hate crimes, both charged and investigated, to the newly established HART Hate Crimes Reporting Portal, and the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS).”¹²*

Concern: This recommendation could be interpreted to include the sharing of mere allegations of crimes (“both charged and investigated”) with state as well as federal¹³ law enforcement agencies, undermining Massachusetts residents’ civil rights. (As a matter of current practice, charged hate crimes are already reported to HART and NIBRS.) Understood in this manner, this recommendation runs counter to the right to due process, and could be exploited and weaponized at the local, state, or federal level. Moreover, in combination with the SCCA’s guidance that all actors responsible for implementing its recommendations utilize the IHRA definition of antisemitism, this recommendation could be construed as instructing local public safety officials to share virtually all reported criticism of Israel to federal and state law enforcement agencies.

⁸ SCCA, Final Report, page 8.

⁹ SCCA, Final Report, page 11.

¹⁰ Nexus Document, <https://nexusproject.us/nexus-resources/the-nexus-document/>

¹¹ Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism, <https://jerusalemdeclaration.org/>

¹² SCCA, Final Report, page 48.

¹³ The National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) is a program of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Solution: The SCCA has affirmed that “the Commonwealth’s response [to antisemitism] must be rooted in shared security.”¹⁴ In keeping with that standard, this recommendation must be discarded.

K–12 Education Recommendations, VI.a.5

SCCA Recommendation: “DESE should establish a statewide Bias Reporting Program for K–12 schools.... DESE should provide the anonymized data collected through this program annually to EOPSS to ensure that the data collected is integrated with existing efforts to collect centralized hate crimes data, including data collected by the Hate Crime Reporting Portal recently launched by the Mass. State Police Hate Crimes Awareness and Response Team (HART). Additionally, this program should collect data on bias incidents — which may not rise to the level of a hate crime — in all K–12 schools.... The program should include an anonymous reporting option.”¹⁵

Concern: This proposal undermines long-standing systems for students and families to report harassment to school administrators prior to reporting to the state if the school does not uphold their rights. It is also a direct violation of state law (G.L. c. 71, § 37L) which prohibits the sharing of non-criminal student information with law enforcement. Additionally, this policy would compromise Governor Healey’s efforts to keep ICE out of our schools by making more school-level data accessible to federal law enforcement through HART, which is available to federal agents.¹⁶

Complaints and reports are not necessarily evidence of hate crime. Tip lines are increasingly utilized as a right-wing political tool to “root out” discussions of race and diversity; Massachusetts must be careful not to replicate those tactics.¹⁷ Research shows that anonymous tip lines exacerbate educational disparities¹⁸: Black and Latino

¹⁴ SCCA, Final Report, page 7.

¹⁵ SCCA, Final Report, page 20.

¹⁶<https://www.mass.gov/news/governor-healey-takes-action-to-keep-ice-out-of-schools-hospitals-courthouses-and-places-of-worship>

¹⁷ See for example: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/education/2022/11/03/youngkins-critical-race-theory-tip-line-virginia-parents/10655007002/>; <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/federal-workers-told-name-dei-colleagues-risk-adverse-consequences-rcna188871>.

¹⁸ Crepeau-Hobson, F., Leech, N. *An Exploratory Investigation of Threat Assessment Practices in Colorado Schools*. *Contemp School Psychol* 26, 458–468 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40688-021-00356-7>

children are more likely to be perceived as “threatening”¹⁹; Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian children are more likely to be reported as “terroristic”; and students with disabilities are disproportionately reported for misbehavior.²⁰ Though anonymous tip lines have been proposed to address a range of problems in schools, in practice they erode both equity and trust and have been used to bully students.²¹ Additionally, anonymous tips are typically received by school teams that include school resource officers, thus increasing police involvement and creating additional and disproportionate risk for students of color and students with disabilities.

Solution: Rather than relying on anonymous tip lines and increasing data sharing with law enforcement, focus on another SCCA recommendation to respond to non-criminal school incidents with “*tailored, non-punitive, and supportive responses, including but not limited to restorative justice*,”²² and allocate dedicated funding for school-based restorative justice professional development and implementation. This aligns with Governor Healey’s guidance to schools regarding bias incidents, which notes that restorative justice practices are an evidence-based approach to stopping misconduct.²³

K–12 Education Recommendations, VI.a.11

SCCA Recommendation: “*DESE should develop a mechanism for reporting problematic curriculum in use in class including materials that promote bias, bigotry or discrimination against any person or group of persons on the basis of protected characteristics.*”²⁴

¹⁹ Louvar Reeves, M.A., Brock, S.E. *School Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management*. Contemp School Psychol 22, 148–162 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40688-017-0158-6>

²⁰ Dewey Cornell and Jennifer Maeng, *Student Threat Assessment as a Safe and Supportive Prevention Strategy: Final Technical Report* (Feb. 20, 2020), <<https://education.virginia.edu/documents/yvpthreat-assessment-project-technical-report-nij2020-02-20-submittedpdf>>; Crepeau-Hobson, F., Leech, N. *An Exploratory Investigation of Threat Assessment Practices in Colorado Schools*. Contemp School Psychol 26, 458–468 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40688-021-00356-7>

²¹ Harold Jordan, *The Risks of Threat Assessment to Students Are Dire*, Youth Today (March 25, 2020), <https://youthtoday.org/2020/03/the-risks-of-threat-assessment-to-students-are-dire/>.

²² SCCA, Final Report, page 20.

²³ <https://www.mass.gov/doc/guidance-on-schools-obligations-to-prevent-and-address-hate-incidents-september-2024/download>

²⁴ SCCA, Final Report, page 23.

Concern: This recommendation mirrors tactics utilized by rightwing groups such as the Heritage Foundation that seek to censor classroom content regarding race and gender.²⁵ As shared by members of the Jewish clergy in their meeting with the Deputy Chief of Policy and Cabinet Affairs on Feb. 3,²⁶ and as emphasized by a Harvard Graduate School of Education Senior Lecturer in an April 29 meeting with Healey-Driscoll staff, “Instead of penalizing teachers for trying, we should support teachers to grow and flourish as they practice teaching hard topics.” That is, best practices indicate that we should invest in professional development for educators rather than threatening them with additional reporting mechanisms.

Solution: In lieu of new reporting systems, focus on another SCCA recommendation that “*Public school districts should institute mandatory anti-bias education for school committees and all K–12 faculty and administrators... includ[ing] antisemitism education and training aligned with a DESE-developed rubric.*”²⁷ Indeed, schools must follow DESE’s History and Social Studies Curriculum guiding principles, which hold that students should have access to diverse perspectives, and that “perceptions of events are affected by race, ethnicity, culture, religion, education, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, and personal experience.”²⁸ Utilize DESE’s resources to enable historically honest teaching and support critical thinking about all states and movements, including Israel and the U.S., without equating critique with hate. Anti-bias trainings that advocate for the exclusion of Palestinian history and narratives because they are inaccurately deemed antisemitic is inconsistent with Massachusetts standards.

²⁵ See for example: TeacherWatch.org, which asks parents to report anonymously on classroom content regarding gender and race; and the Trump administration’s END DEI tip line <<https://www.npr.org/2025/03/07/g-s1-52515/if-you-see-something-woke-say-something>>; and *How Discriminatory Censorship Laws Imperil Public Education*, National Education Policy Center (Nov. 30, 2023) <<https://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/censorship>>.

²⁶ *Jewish Concerns About the Recommendations and Assumptions of the MA Commission on Combating Antisemitism*, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MYJql1fLwd67wt-OcOM4IW0wvXA0QXoJ/view?usp=sharing>.

²⁷ SCCA, Final Report, page 19.

²⁸ *History and Social Studies Framework*, MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Guiding Principles 2 and 8, pages 13, 15-16 <<https://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/hss/2018-12.pdf>>.

Higher Education Recommendations, VI.b.1

SCCA Recommendation: *“Colleges and universities should have a... protocol for how a community member can report any incident of hate, bias, harassment, or discrimination to the school administration.”*²⁹

Concern: Reporting mechanisms are important for combating bias, but can be weaponized to advance a political agenda or personal vendetta. For example, the Trump administration has used the Title VI and Title IX reporting mechanisms to target political opponents and coerce universities to roll back curricula about racism and other disfavored topics.³⁰ Thus, reporting protocol utilized in higher education must be designed to prevent exploitation.

Solution: Institutions should continue to offer community members a confidential means for sharing an alleged bias incident with a third party, such as an ombudsperson. When appropriate, an independent investigation should follow. Remedies should prioritize reparative practices and should distinguish between discomfort and danger.

Higher Education Recommendations, VI.b.15

SCCA Recommendation: *“Academic institutions and affiliated organizations should refrain from participating in discriminatory academic boycotts that target individuals or institutions based on race, religion, national origin, or ancestry... When events or organizations call for discriminatory academic boycotts by the institution or its affiliated organizations, institutions should respond promptly and unequivocally by reaffirming that such actions may be inconsistent with state and federal antidiscrimination laws and run counter to the values of academic freedom and institutional integrity.”*³¹

Concern: Boycotts of countries and institutions for their policies and actions are neither illegal nor discriminatory.³² Boycotts are a central tool in the struggle for civil

²⁹ SCCA, Final Report, page 34.

³⁰ *The Weaponization of Civil Rights Law to Repress Campus Speech on Palestine*, American Association of University Professors and Middle East Studies Association, Discriminating Against Dissent (Nov. 2025) <https://afi.mesana.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Discriminating_Against_Dissent_Report.pdf>.

³¹ SCCA, Final Report, page 41.

³² *NAACP v. Claiborne Hardware Co.*, [458 U.S. 886](#) (1982).

rights; Massachusetts would be on the wrong side of history to condemn them. As the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism states: “Boycott, divestment and sanctions are commonplace, non-violent forms of political protest against states. In the Israeli case they are not, in and of themselves, antisemitic.”³³

Solution: Massachusetts should uphold the right of individuals and organizations to boycott countries and institutions, based on their policies and actions, as protected political speech.³⁴

Please contact Together for an Inclusive Massachusetts at info@inclusivemassachusetts.org or learn more at www.inclusivemassachusetts.org

³³ Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism, <https://jerusalemdeclaration.org/>

³⁴ See for example: National Campus Jewish Alliance, <https://www.nationalcampusjewishalliance.org/>