

HB 2061 -- PROHIBITING ANTISEMITIC ACTIONS

SPONSOR: Hruza

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Emerging Issues by a vote of 7 to 3, with 1 member voting present.

This bill defines "antisemitism" and requires that public schools, school districts, and public institutions of higher education integrate the definition of antisemitism into codes of conduct and prohibit antisemitic conduct in the same manner that discrimination motivated by race is treated.

The bill prohibits discrimination by public schools, school districts, and public institutions of higher education on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, disability, religion, or marital status against students or employees. The bill provides that classes, guidance services, counseling services, and financial assistance services be available equally.

The bill requires Title VI coordinators at the State Board of Education and the Coordinating Board for Higher Education to monitor antisemitic discrimination and harassment at public schools and education institutions. The coordinators will investigate complaints and determine if an education institution allowed or failed to prohibit the discrimination and harassment and compile annual reports to be submitted to the General Assembly by July 1st of each year.

This bill is similar to HB 937 (2025).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that in recent years, antisemitic violence has increased tremendously. This bill seeks to reduce such violence and intimidation in schools, but still allows for people to exercise their right to free speech in criticism of Jewish people, Israel, or any policy having to do with such matters. Supporters further state that there are currently no standards or procedures in place for schools to properly deal with incidents of antisemitism. This bill creates such a standard against which antisemitic intimidation and threats can be judged.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Hruza; Agudath Israel of Missouri; Arnie Dienoff; A.J. Moll; Audrey Fine; Ayden Nelson; Charlie Weingarten; David Soffer, Combat Antisemitism Movement; Eli Meissner; Jeffrey Abraham; Kathrine

Rose Ellenham; Michael Ellenhorn; Michael Lourie, Jewish Federation of St. Louis; Sam Zitin; Sarah Falkoff; Scott Biondo, Jewish Federation of St. Louis; Stacey Newman; Michaela Moll; Eric Nelson; and Traci Goldstein.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that this bill would restrict speech, and place into the hands of a nameless, unaccountable entity the authority to decide what is or is not antisemitism. Opponents further state that present discrimination laws already take care of such matters. If these provisions are adopted, this bill would chill speech, curb meaningful discussions in class, and cause students to self-censor. Opponents state that a person's interpretation of events or thoughts on a subject should not be silenced simply because they give voice to an opinion.

Testifying in person against the bill were Jack Bennett Goldstein; Michael Berg; Robert Linsey, Amnesty Missouri; Amnesty International USA; Salman Mahmood; Samuel Brian; Steven Kellogg; Solomon Alpert; Aaron Neiman; Abel Richardson; Alden Williams; Arch Kimbriel; Donald Evan Maki; Drew Mccausland; Grace Konrad; Izn H. Naqui; Mid-Missouri Fellowship of Reconciliation; Margaret Tyler; Mark Haim; Maximus Glamour; Paul Lehmann; Reese Holcomb; Rita M. Yencarelli; Sahar Bhutto; and Kevin Hertel.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony and witnesses testifying online can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.