

House Education Committee  
February 11th, 2025  
Room 218-N  
Proponent Testimony for HB 2299  
David Soffer  
[Davidrsoffer@gmail.com](mailto:Davidrsoffer@gmail.com)

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2299. As many of you know, I wear being Jewish on my sleeve. Many of you have seen me walking around this building with my yarmulke (skull cap), my yellow ribbon and leading countless Jewish causes in the State of Kansas, while serving the last three Kansas Governors. Being Jewish is my identity and there is nothing in the world that can make me turn away from my love from being Jewish. With that love though, comes years of pain.

I have experienced quite a bit of antisemitism over the years. When I grew up in NY, my friend and I were cornered on the subway, with a group of kids continuously yelling Jew as they harassed and assaulted us. In college, I was thrown out of multiple student groups for being a supporter of Israel. Early in my career, I was stereotyped for wearing my yarmulke and told I should only work to represent those Jews that take our tax dollars and make kids all day. That caused me to shy away from wearing my yarmulke during work hours for over a decade, as I wanted my career to develop beyond identifying as “the Jewish guy”. In Kansas, I was grateful for the opportunity to run for the 29<sup>th</sup> House District in 2022. I made the conscious decision to wear my yarmulke when I campaign, just as I do outside of work when I am with my family and kids. Unfortunately, I experienced multiple instances of being told “go back to where you belong” and “your kind aren’t wanted here”. Between that experience and 10/7/23, I personally decided that I refuse to let them break me, so I decided to no longer avoid wearing my identity where I work. Don’t let it fool you though into believing that I don’t hear painful and hurtful remarks.

These are just my individual experiences. See, what any person wearing their Jewish identity will tell you is we have all experienced or know some that has experienced painful antisemitism in our lives. For some, it may be jokes about the way we look, the things we wear, for others it may be repeating drawn out stereotypical antisemitic remarks about money, control, disloyalty to the US, among others. Recently, it has been any type of support for Israel and being Jewish, as being responsible for everything that happens in Israel and the Middle East. These attacks have been unrelenting. In the year after 10/7/23 here in the US, we saw 10,000 more incidents of antisemitism, equaling a 200% rise since 10/7/23<sup>1</sup>. It doesn’t take much work to find the horrifying videos of Jews being attacked across the globe in the last 17 months, including across the United States. Furthermore, this has been even more apparent on college campuses, including here in Kansas where administration, professors, teachers’ assistants and students have spread

---

<sup>1</sup> [Over 10,000 Antisemitic Incidents Recorded in the U.S. since Oct. 7, 2023, According to ADL Preliminary Data | ADL](#)

much of that hate in the direction of student students, placing them on an island without much help to keep them safe, let alone being able to feel like equal human beings. While the Board of Regents, their CEO Blake Flanders and others have been open to working through ideas on how to deal with antisemitism, it is clear school officials have no intention of stopping it.

All these experiences are why HB 2299 is critical to the future of Jews in Kansas. This is not a problem that started on 10/7/23 but rather that day just poured gasoline on an existing problem. For far too long, our universities have given way to antisemitism and doctrinarian of anti-Jewish beliefs to our students across our education system. Instead of promoting critical thinking, too many kids and young adults have been taught that Jews are the problem, or the cause for (insert world problem here). When students have tried to speak up, they are often shut down in the classroom, or even by administration. When trying to appeal to DEI offices, it has become crystal clear that Jews are not part of the DEI plan for nearly all our universities. No example better encapsulates this problem than the Kansas University Graduate Teaching Assistants Coalition came out with a statement shortly after October 7<sup>th</sup> praising the attacks on Israel and stating, *“Violence will necessarily continue as long as apartheid and settler colonialism exist<sup>2</sup>.”* More excerpts from this include *“We encourage our members to educate themselves on and teach about the apartheid”* and *“Never in history has violence been initiated by the oppressed”*. (I want to state that Kansas University President Douglas Girod spoke out against this, but did not take any action). I ask you to stop and think about that for a second. There are teaching assistants and professors at Kansas University that believe it is OK to teach that murdering over a thousand Jews at gunpoint, including beheading civilians, raping women and burning babies, is perfectly OK. Furthermore, they believe this is necessary and a welcome result. Is that what our taxpayer dollars should be used for? Is that the education we want for our children from our taxpayer funded education system? We ask why antisemitism is on the rise. It is because for years we have turned a blind eye to it being taught in our classroom with no regard for the consequences of teaching this indoctrination of hate. In turn, this hate that is being taught with our taxpayer dollars is then used to harass and commit violence against civilians of the Jewish faith.

It was just ten years ago that someone filled with the same indoctrination arrived at the Jewish Community Center and Village Shalom Senior Living with the goal of killing as many Jews as possible. This is what happens when you create a system that funds hate with no checks in place. When school and university administrators turn a blind eye that they would never turn when it comes to other controversial issues. For instance, can the University of Kansas seriously tell me that it would allow David Duke to teach a course on racism, under the guise of freedom of speech? We all know this would never be tolerated and yet we allow a consistent stream of antisemitism to flow through our university system. This is an unfortunate example of how Jews are treated in a different class as it pertains to diversity and hate as it pertains to education and

---

<sup>2</sup> [Palestine Solidarity Letter – GTAC AFT Local 6403](#)

quite frankly as it pertains to society. We can and must do better. THIS IS WHY HB 2299 IS NEEDED!

I am truly grateful for the committee's time in reading this testimony and giving the Jewish community the time to present on antisemitism. We all seek the same thing every other minority and historically discriminated group seek. The ability to live in peace while being able to practice our religion and culture is our main concern today. The question you need to ask yourselves is whether you want taxpayer dollars to be used to indoctrinate hate, endangering the lives of Kansans. Is it appropriate for our education system to turn the blind eye when so many lives are impacted with targeted hate meant to create violent reactions. Is this what we want to ask Kansans to fund? Or do we finally say enough is enough and we set a standard that indoctrination to target Jews is a line too far and state funding can't be used for this political purpose. Please support HB 2299 and put an end to taxpayer dollars being used to promote and practice antisemitism.