

Testimony of Jamie Beran
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Submitted to
The House Committee on Education and Workforce
Subcommittee on Health Employment Labor and Pensions
For the hearing:
“Bad Medicine: Politics, Unions, and Anti-Semitism in Health Care”
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Chairman Allen, Ranking Member DeSaulnier, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to deliver this testimony today on the fight to defeat antisemitism in our country.

The organization I lead as CEO, Bend the Arc: Jewish Action, is the largest national membership organization focused on domestic public policy matters of concern to the Jewish community. We work to fight antisemitism, racism, and other forms of hate for the safety of our diverse American Jewish community and for the health of our democracy more broadly.

American Jews are afraid, and for good reason.

Devastating attacks at American Jewish gatherings, synagogues, and against visibly Jewish individuals, have many Jews in the U.S. and around the world feeling deep fear and pain. Antisemitism is affecting the physical and emotional wellbeing of Jewish people,¹ and that threat is increasing in many sectors across American society, including in our healthcare system. With each passing day, we see that attacking Jewish people—including as a proxy for attacking Israel—is becoming normalized.² Jews are conscious of the risk of being targeted as Jews every time we enter an expressly Jewish space, and now many non-Jewish spaces are fraught as well.

I feel this fear myself some days when I drop my kids off for religious school at our conservative synagogue in New Jersey and at camp every summer.

Alongside this terrifying increase in physical attacks is the unsettling sense that Jewish people are suddenly at the center of the most controversial issues in our politics, often positioned as the animating factor in whatever the problem at hand is. This can show up in the bitter, caustic public debates on- and offline, where antisemitic tropes are used across the political spectrum. It can also manifest when fighting antisemitism is used as a proxy for government policies³ that

¹ UC Davis Staff, “UC Davis Study Examines Rising Mental Health Challenges Among California Jews,” September 12, 2025

<https://excellence.ucdavis.edu/news/uc-davis-study-examines-rising-mental-health-challenges-among-california-jews>

² “AJC’s State of Antisemitism Report 2025: Behind the Numbers,” <https://www.ajc.org/AntisemitismReport2025/BehindtheNumbers>

³ Department of Homeland Security, Press Release, “DHS to Begin Screening Aliens’ Social Media Activity for Antisemitism,” April 9, 2025

endanger our neighbors, positioning Jews as the scapegoat for these policies and a range of societal ills. This is what I experience in our politics today, and it is an insidious way that antisemitism has been used throughout history⁴—positioning Jews as both the puppetmaster and the scapegoat. An easy target to blame while deflecting from the true causes of harm.

Antisemitism is never acceptable, and there is something particularly heartbreaking and cruel about encountering it in a healthcare clinical setting. Against the backdrop of a society-wide increase in antisemitic acts,⁵ fear and insecurity in the most personal setting, where our physical or mental health is on the line, is unspeakably inhumane. And for Jewish healthcare workers, feeling this in their place of employment is terrifying. It feels like the call is coming from inside the house. Yet in 2025, after a nurse in Oregon⁶ was fired for calling Jews “vermin” who she wished would “meet their ancestors soon,” her nursing license was routinely renewed without any training required, despite petitions and community outcry. How could any Jewish patient ever be expected to feel safe in that nurse’s care? Similarly, imagine the trauma of a Jewish woman⁷ and granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor who, after October 7th, tried to discuss her deep fear with her therapist only to be told the videos of Hamas’s attack were fake, and that her trauma was the manufactured result of a conspiracy-peddling lobby aiming to bolster the Israeli state. These are just some examples of how the normalization of antisemitic language and tropes across society endanger our physical and mental health in very real, concrete ways. They are the opposite of practitioners’ ethical responsibility to do no harm.

We also have an academic study done by a major medical school,⁸ 88% of Jewish healthcare workers reported experiencing antisemitism at work since October 7th.

To be clear, criticism of the government of Israel, or of American policy towards it, is not inherently antisemitic. But both supporters and critics of Israel can fuel antisemitism by conflating Jews with the state of Israel with no distinction, holding all Jews accountable for the government of Israel’s actions or invoking anti-Jewish tropes and stereotypes.

<https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/news-releases/dhs-to-begin-screening-aliens-social-media-activity-for-antisemitism>

⁴ “Understanding Antisemitism: An Offering to our Movement A Resource from Jews For Racial & Economic Justice”

<https://jfrej-web-assets.nyc3.digitaloceanspaces.com/JFREJ-Understanding-Antisemitism-November-2017-v1-3-2.pdf>

⁵ “Senate Bipartisan Task Force for Combating Antisemitism Releases Statement on 2024 FBI Hate Crimes Report,” August 8, 2025

https://www.rosen.senate.gov/2025/08/08/senate-bipartisan-task-force-for-combating-antisemitism-releases-statement-on-2024-fbi-hate-crimes-report/?utm_source=perplexity

⁶ Robert Horenstein, “Antisemitism, the world’s oldest disease, is infecting the US healthcare sector. Can we stop it from spreading??,” December 24, 2025

<https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/antisemitism-the-worlds-oldest-disease-is-infecting-the-us-healthcare-sector-can-we-stop-it-from-spreading/>

⁷ Jay Deitcher, “When Your Therapist Hates Israel,” September 6, 2024

<https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/community/articles/divisions-gaza-antisemitism-therapists-couch>

⁸ “Antisemitism aimed at health care professionals has grown since 2023, study finds,” December 17, 2024,

<https://today.uic.edu/antisemitism-aimed-at-health-care-professionals-has-grown-since-2023-study-finds/>

The significant spike in antisemitism is taking a grave social and emotional toll, with many in our community feeling alone, betrayed, or unsure of who to trust. We know that antisemitism and all identity-based hatreds do more than harm the targets; they isolate and terrify whole communities. But this is not the only reason we in the Jewish community often feel alone.

One of the things that scares me the most is that I clearly see political actors benefiting from dividing Jews from our neighbors and allies—and it is particularly pernicious when those actors are using government power to do so. As a Jewish leader, it angers me to see my people's safety used as a pretext to harm other communities, violate their rights,⁹ detain immigrants¹⁰, or destroy parts of civil society.¹¹ A majority of Jews polled¹² have consistently opposed this administration's response to antisemitism, even as their fear of antisemitism grows. In this specific context, many Jews are overwhelmingly opposed to politically-motivated attacks, in our name, on the professional organizations and labor unions that protect our frontline healthcare workers. This is not making Jews safer, nor increasing the sense of safety and belonging we are entitled to. These disingenuous attacks seek to advance ulterior political goals that have nothing to do with us. It isn't combatting antisemitism; it's weaponizing it. And that is precisely what we are seeing from the administration and their allies.

We also see that these same actors have built a dangerous permission structure for bigotry and antisemitism through their embrace of white nationalists and extremists. The Great Replacement Conspiracy¹³ and Nazi-era racialized hatred we saw emerge at the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville¹⁴ can now be heard from public figures in the media and in the corridors of power. This normalizing of hate endangers all Americans, including Jews, who have suffered oppression in so many eras when antisemitism was allowed to take root and enabled at the highest levels of government and society. Antisemitism does not exist in a vacuum, set apart from other forms of bigotry. When racism and xenophobia are allowed to flourish, antisemitism

⁹ Joel Rose and Adrian Florido, "Trump administration lays out its evidence for deporting activist Mahmoud Khalil," NPR, April 10, 2025

<https://www.npr.org/2025/04/10/nx-s1-5356481/mahmoud-khalil-dhs-evidence-detained-palestinian-protests-columbia-antisemitism>

¹⁰ Jazmine Ulloa and Hamed Aleaziz, "Arrest of Wisconsin Mosque Leader Was Tied to Trump Antisemitism Campaign," New York Times, April 3, 2026

<https://www.nytimes.com/2026/04/03/us/wisconsin-mosque-leader-antisemitism.html>

¹¹ Judith Lichtman, "Antisemitism and the Attack on Civil Society," from "The Shofar Report: A Call to Defend Democracy and Confront Antisemitism," Nexus Project, October 2025

<https://nexusproject.us/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/The-Shofar-Report-Antisemitism-and-the-Attack-on-Civil-Society.pdf>

¹² Jason DeRose, "Most American Jews say Trump is using antisemitism as an 'excuse' to silence free speech at universities," NPR, September 17, 2025

<https://www.npr.org/2025/09/17/nx-s1-5543212/study-most-american-jews-dont-agree-with-trumps-tactics-for-combating-antisemitism>

¹³ HIAS Staff, "Deep Dive: The Great Replacement Theory," May 7, 2026

<https://hias.org/news/deep-dive-great-replacement-theory/>

¹⁴ Documenting Hate: Charlottesville, August 7, 2018 PBS FRONTLINE and ProPublica

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/documenting-hate-charlottesville/>

inevitably flourishes right alongside them. That is one of the many reasons it is most effective to fight antisemitism alongside other forms of bigotry and hatred.

It is critical that members of this Committee examine antisemitic hate as well as other forms of hate in sectors within its jurisdiction. I would hope that the goal is to call out, in an even-handed manner, antisemitic hate and incidents, regardless of where they come from on the political spectrum. However, part of what this Committee appears to be doing today is aimed at something else entirely.

The memberships of the often large, democratically-run unions and professional organizations that are the subject of this hearing are engaged—online and at in-person meetings—in the very debates that are happening around every water cooler in America. The discussions reflect a wide diversity of viewpoints, including among the Jewish community itself. Indeed, some of the loudest, most active voices in these organizations on both sides of the debates around Israel and Gaza, as well as the war in Iran, are themselves Jewish. Our First Amendment protects those debates, and however heated, they are not per se evidence of illegal antisemitic discrimination or harassment. Yes, these organizations should of course apply their own conduct rules uniformly, and they must adhere to federal civil rights laws. But unfairly smearing these organizations as antisemitic and harming them because of what some of their members may say can only be seen as a politically-motivated attack, using a veneer of ostensible Jewish safety. And that is actually dangerous for Jews.

And if this hearing is about using Jewish fear as a predicate to inappropriate Congressional intervention into the protected speech and debate of individuals who are members of unions and voluntary professional associations, that is clearly government overreach — and again, that makes Jews less safe.

If the goal of this discussion is to enhance the safety, wellbeing, and sense of belonging of Jews in the health care arena, then let's talk about that.

The health and safety of every American has been under attack since this Administration began its mission to defund our healthcare across the board. Whether forcing the largest Medicaid cut in history and having the audacity to call that legislation beautiful, or wiping out the Affordable Care Act tax credits that millions of us rely on to buy health insurance, the message is clear: the physical wellbeing of average Americans does not matter nearly as much as building an even more gilded age than the one in which we are currently living. Jews suffer under this system just like the rest of our fellow Americans, and all of the precarity we have discussed here is supercharged by the additional questions of whether prescriptions can be filled, life-saving treatments can be administered and medical bills can be paid.

And unbelievably, against this backdrop, we have the further fact that you have also frozen funding for the Office of Civil Rights at Health and Human Services - the very agency whose explicit mission is the same one as this hearing: to root out claims of bias in healthcare.

Beyond these two—helping Americans afford their desperately needed medical care, and funding the office expressly constituted to investigate civil rights violations in health settings—one glaring feature of the lack of Jewish safety in healthcare remains.

Jews are safer when we have robust access to scientifically sound and culturally appropriate healthcare, and our access to healthcare should not be contingent upon the religious beliefs of providers. Our Jewish faith and its teachings call on us to trust women, to support people and families as they make decisions about pregnancy and parenting, and to ensure that each person can have access to a full spectrum of safe reproductive healthcare. This includes a long established, affirmative rabbinic requirement that abortion be at least considered when the life or wellbeing of the woman is in danger.¹⁵ The Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs* prevents many Jews from exercising our God-given, constitutionally protected right to embody our religion as we, our families, our rabbis and our doctors see fit.¹⁶ Just this month, 30 Jewish organizations from every Jewish denomination in America joined an amicus brief organized by our partners at the National Council of Jewish Women¹⁷ in the Supreme Court case regarding access to the critically necessary medication abortion pill.

In my role as a Jewish leader, I hear from many rabbis, Jewish educators, and community leaders that alongside the emotional or physical harm of antisemitism, Jewish people are often feeling alone, misunderstood, abandoned and isolated. They are experiencing, yet again how antisemitism and hate thrive by dividing communities. At the same time, in the work I do fighting antisemitism and all forms of hate—alongside our partners—I regularly experience how the antidote to feelings of loneliness and isolation is building community and deepening understanding across lines of difference. This is how we effectively bolster a diverse democracy that keeps Jews, and all of us, safe. So the most immediate lifeline we can throw a community in crisis is for Americans to refuse to be divided; to come together in support of Jews and all communities; to work together to reject antisemitism and hate; and to strengthen the institutions we need to build a community that honors our shared humanity.

That's why a primary pillar of President Biden's landmark U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism¹⁸ in 2023 was: to "Build cross-community solidarity and collective action to counter hate." My organization was proud to be among the one thousand Jewish community sounding boards engaged to ensure that the national strategy reflected the needs and lived experiences of Jews all over this country from every profession and walk of life. As the strategy rightly stated: "American Jewish communities have a long legacy of building cross-community relationships

¹⁵ Daniel Eisenberg, M.D, "Abortion in Jewish Law," <https://aish.com/abortion-in-jewish-law/>

¹⁶ National Council of Jewish Women, "Abortion and Jewish Values Toolkit," https://www.ncjw.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/NCJW_ReproductiveGuide_Final.pdf

¹⁷ Amicus brief National Council Of Jewish Women and 50 Organizations in *Danco Laboratories LLC v. The State of Louisiana et. al.*

<https://www.ncjw.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/NCJW-Supreme-Court-Amicus-Brief-Louisiana-v-FDA.docx.pdf>

¹⁸ The U.S. National Strategy to Combat Antisemitism, May 2023

<https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/U.S.-National-Strategy-to-Counter-Antisemitism.pdf>

characterized by meaningful connection, trust, mutual respect, and understanding across differences.”

Jewish history has taught us painful lessons about where hate, division, social fragmentation and mistrust can lead. Jewish history has also shown us the multitude of ways that American Jews show up together with our neighbors to fight for a fair society that includes us all, including how often our non-Jewish neighbors show up for us. Political leaders have a role to play by working with, not dismantling civil society—including unions, and vital associations supporting health professionals. The most immediate need is not punishment, but to help more Americans understand what antisemitism is and how fueling it in our public debate and in our everyday lives makes Jewish people and our democracy less safe. Our elected leaders should be using their influence to bring people together and strengthen partnerships to tackle this urgent threat. They should not be stoking division and eroding the norms and institutions that Jews and all Americans need now more than ever.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Instead of adopting the punitive approach favored by the administration, Congress should take actions that actually increase belonging and safety.

1. **Support the Improving Reporting to Prevent Hate Act (HR 2588).**¹⁹ Jews are safer when those of us working to fight antisemitism, both in and out of government, have trustworthy and comprehensive data about where the threats exist. This bill would require mandatory, consistent reporting of hate crimes to the FBI by conditioning federal funding under the Safe Streets Act on credible hate crime reporting for law enforcement agencies serving populations of more than 100,000 people.
2. **Support the Antisemitism Response and Prevention Act (H.R. 6806).**²⁰ Jews are also safer when the civil rights infrastructure of our democratic institutions is robustly funded to defend our rights, as well as the rights of other targeted communities. This bill would fully fund the Office for Civil Rights at the Department of Education, and mandate a Title VI Coordinator on every college campus. It also would fully fund the Nonprofit Security Grant Program to support the safety of religious communities while ensuring grantee institutions are not prohibited from religiously motivated racial justice work or work supporting immigrants. Finally, it creates a National Coordinator to Counter Antisemitism to coordinate a whole-of-government effort to combat hate while explicitly protecting free speech and preventing antisemitism from being used as a pretext to pursue ulterior political agendas.

¹⁹ “H.R.2588 - Improving Reporting to Prevent Hate Act of 2025,” April 2, 2025, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/2588/text>

²⁰ “H.R.6806 - Antisemitism Response and Prevention Act of 2025,” December 17, 2025, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/6806/text>

3. **Use antisemitism definitions and guides as interpretive, educational tools and not speech codes.**²¹ American Jews are safer when fighting antisemitism cannot be used as a pretext to curtail First Amendment-protected speech. American civil rights law does not contain codified definitions of any kind of hate, and the drive to codify one for antisemitism only has not curtailed antisemitism. Resources like definitions can elucidate and educate but imposing them as policy is divisive and unnecessary. Further, the Jewish community is far from settled on a single definition; in fact, we are deeply divided on it, and many among us, myself included, firmly believe that legally codifying any one of them does not actually make us safer. The lack of a single codified definition in federal law does not stand in the way of implementing any one of the recommendations of the 2023 U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism.

4. **Call out antisemitism whenever and wherever you hear it.** Dangerous conspiracy theories and antisemitic tropes cannot be normalized and allowed to grow if we refuse to let it be this country's "normal." The way our elected leaders talk about antisemitism, and about Jewish people, has a material impact on our safety. As just one example, it is critical that our elected officials denounce and cease using the Great Replacement Conspiracy and other related dangerous rhetoric, such as "invasion" language. Everyone has a duty to call out antisemitism and hate when we see it and to use care with the language we use. Additionally, even supportive leaders should speak about antisemitism, mindful that the language we use to talk about antisemitism can impact our effectiveness in combatting it. Bend the Arc has a Dismantling Antisemitism Messaging Guide²² that explains in detail how to talk about antisemitism and Jewish safety effectively.

My organization regularly engages with and offers training for partners and government officials to deepen their understanding, and to address antisemitism and Jewish exclusion in their own networks. I'm incredibly proud of that work, and I'm always heartened to see how receptive people are to understanding why it's so critical for non-Jews to recognize, speak out against, and fight antisemitism.

Antisemitism is a threat to our democracy, and it is in democracy that Jews have always been safest. Because of that historical fact, the version of this country that is safest for Jews, and our many intersecting identities, is the version of this country that is safest for everyone—thriving multiracial democracy. That can mean many different things, but for our purposes in this hearing today, it means a country where every human being has access to dignified, appropriate and affordable healthcare, because there is no higher Jewish value than *pikuach nefesh*, saving a life.

²¹ Kenneth S. Stern, "Written Testimony of Kenneth S. Stern," March 27, 2025, <https://www.help.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/06e69363-9e5d-54f9-8019-dbe95168b2a9/Stern%20Testimony.pdf>

²² "Dismantling Antisemitism Message Guide: How to talk about antisemitism like we believe we can end it together—so that we can" written by Sharon Rose Goldtzvik, prepared for Bend the Arc: Jewish Action and the Collaborative for Jewish Organizing and its member organizations. https://dismantlingantisemitism.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/ASMG_Full_2025.pdf

It also means a country where the medical professionals who keep us and our loved ones healthy are protected on the job from abuse and have the ability to come together and be greater than the sum of their parts by bargaining as a unit for a respectful work environment. It means Jews being able to partner with their doctors on what they know in their souls is right for themselves and their families. And it means refusing to remain silent in the face of my safety as a Jewish person being used as a pretext to harm my allies and neighbors.

Thank you.

Jamie Beran, CEO, Bend the Arc: Jewish Action