

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Suzanne Bonamici (OR-01)

Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education

"From Playground to Classroom: The Spread of Antisemitism in K-12 Schools"

2175 Rayburn House Office Building

Wednesday, September 10, 2025 | 10:15 a.m.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the witnesses.

We can all agree that schools are responsible for creating safe learning environments for students, teachers, and faculty free from discrimination, harassment, and violence. There is no question that antisemitic acts of harassment and intimidation have increased since October 7, 2023, and as I've said repeatedly in this committee, we must do more. But this is now the eleventh hearing on antisemitism we have had in the past few years. And what has happened? Are things better? No. Antisemitism is on the rise, and tensions and divisions have increased.

We can and must do more to protect Jewish students and Jewish Americans who are threatened, harassed, and attacked because of who they are. But once again, I do not see the work of this Committee as productive in accomplishing the stated goal. Today's hearing and multiple past hearings have been used to attack schools and their leaders and educators rather than to have a substantive discussion about how to curb antisemitism. Some on this committee belittled and shamed the now former President of Northwestern University, Michael Schill, a descendant of Holocaust survivors, and gloated when he resigned. That does not stop the spread of antisemitism.

One of our strongest tools is the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in the Department of Education. OCR is dedicated to investigating and resolving civil rights violations, including antisemitic incidents, at schools and universities. But the Trump Administration fired almost half of OCR's staff and closed seven of its twelve regional offices.

Instead of offering any real solutions, Republicans use antisemitism as an excuse to turn our nation's civil rights laws upside down and undermine public education. We have seen this most prominently with higher education, and it is clear the committee is now seeking to do the same thing to our local public elementary, middle, and high schools.

The reality is that the Trump Administration and Congressional Republicans are using the real plight of Jewish students experiencing antisemitism to destabilize institutions they don't approve of, whether institutions of higher education or teachers' unions.

And if you wonder why, here's a quote from the *Academe* magazine last spring, 'Donald Trump is coming for America's universities and higher education workers for the same reason that Benito Mussolini demanded loyalty oaths in 1931 and Viktor Orbán launched a 'vicious smear campaign' against Hungary's premier university in 2019: Our commitment to open inquiry over propaganda, to persuasion over coercion, to democracy over dictatorship provides a check on authoritarian rule.'

And I will add that all of this is happening while Republicans in Congress continue to refuse to address the antisemitic cancer that is metastasizing in their own party, including in the Trump White House, and against the backdrop of the promotion of White Christian Nationalists into key government roles.

I have consistently called out the multiple Trump White House officials with ties to antisemitic extremists, which my colleagues have not, including the liaison to the Department of Homeland Security, the communications director for the Office of Management and Budget, and the deputy press secretary of the Department of Defense who posted Nazi slogans on her social media accounts and promoted the antisemitic ‘Great Replacement’ conspiracy theory.

The leader of President Trump’s antisemitism task force agreed that the president could ‘revoke someone’s Jew card’ and shared a post on social media from the former leader of a white supremacist organization that called for the ‘Nazification of America.’

The current White House Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy, Stephen Miller, is known as a racist and white nationalist. The Rabbinical Assembly called for his firing during the first Trump Administration because of his white supremacist views. So did 25 Jewish Members of Congress, who wrote, “These hateful views have no place in our government, much less just steps from the Oval Office. At this time of rising antisemitism, xenophobia, racism, and white supremacy, we must forcefully call out and refuse to accept intolerance or hate anywhere within our government.”

And now Stephen Miller has far-reaching influence in the White House. In an interview, President Trump said that it would be a downgrade if he appointed Stephen Miller as national security adviser, instead saying that ‘Stephen is much higher on the totem pole than that.’ Mr. Chairman, you just criticized the trafficking of antisemitic tropes, and you said to use ‘every tool possible.’

What will truly help Jewish students – and Jewish Americans – would be to determine why the Trump Administration has been infiltrated by white nationalists and antisemites, and to ascertain their reasoning for dismantling the Office of Civil Rights. Defunding universities and undermining public schools will hurt students, Jewish and others, instead of providing them a safe place to learn. If this committee truly cares about Jewish students and fighting antisemitism, we do have an obligation – we have an obligation, as the Chairman said, to use ‘every tool possible’ and to exert our full authority.

So therefore, I move that the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education subpoena Stephen N. Miller, White House Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy, to come before this committee as a witness no later than thirty calendar days from the adoption of this motion, to answer for the Trump Administration’s antisemitic actions, and to answer for the defunding the Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights, which will exacerbate antisemitism at our nation’s schools.

If my colleagues truly care about rooting out antisemitism, they will surely support this motion.

I look forward to the discussion on the motion, and I yield back.