

Testimony of Rabbi Jill Jacobs
Before the
House Education and Workforce Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary,
and Secondary Education
September 10, 2025
"From Playground to Classroom: The Spread of Antisemitism in K-12 Schools"

Good morning. Thank you, Chairman Kiley and Ranking Member Bonamici for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am Rabbi Jill Jacobs, CEO of T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights which represents 2,300 rabbis and cantors across the United States and Canada. T'ruah brings the Torah's ideals of human dignity (*tzelem elohim*), equality (*shiv'yon*), and justice (*tzedek*) to life by empowering rabbis and cantors to be moral voices and to lead Jewish communities in advancing democracy and human rights for all people. Our rabbis come from all of the major Jewish denominations, and collectively, they serve hundreds of thousands of Jews across 47 states. They work in synagogues, day schools, college campuses, Jewish Community Centers, hospitals, and more.

I am also a graduate of public schools, the parent of public school students, and the granddaughter of a public high school principal. I know from my own family's history, and from Jewish history how crucial public schools were in helping Jewish immigrants to integrate into America, and to join the middle class. To this day, public schools are essential in providing children of all races, ethnicities, religions, and national backgrounds with the education, skills, and relationships they need to flourish in this country.

Throughout my career, I have written and spoken publicly about antisemitism—its long and ugly history and contemporary manifestations—in order to provide more people with the tools to understand, recognize, and stop antisemitism in their own communities. This work has included creating resources and training for schools, nonprofits, universities, and government agencies. As the CEO of T'ruah, the focus of my work has been on better equipping rabbis to support members of their own communities who are experiencing antisemitism, and to help others in their broader communities to recognize and address antisemitism when it arises.

When it comes to antisemitism, rabbis are on the front lines. Every day, I hear from rabbis facing antisemitism: graffiti on synagogue doors, hate-filled flyers dropped in the driveways of their congregants, bomb threats, and, increasingly, violence. When a Jewish child encounters antisemitism at school, their family is going to report it not only to the school, but also to their rabbi. In giving pastoral care to children and their parents, rabbis experience firsthand the way that antisemitism in schools harms Jewish families—and the compounding negative effects when schools don't handle antisemitic incidents swiftly and decisively.

Rabbis do more than provide pastoral care after antisemitism happens. They also build their communities' resilience in the face of rising antisemitism. They help their congregants recognize, understand, and respond to antisemitism in ways that help prevent it from happening again. They grow networks of solidarity through relationships with local clergy of other faiths. They frequently are the ones who bring issues directly to school officials and elected officials to ensure that the concerns of Jewish families are taken seriously, and they help to educate about Jewish history, culture, and practice, as well as about antisemitism, in schools and local communities.

Antisemitism: On the Rise in Schools and Beyond

I want to start by saying that antisemitism is real. And unfortunately, it is growing. Every Jewish community in the United States fears being targeted by antisemitic violence. As rabbis prepare for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services in the next few weeks, they must consider not only how to inspire their communities through prayers and sermons, but also how to ensure that their congregants can gather to pray safely.

Just in the past few months, we have seen horrific antisemitic attacks in the United States, including the tragic murders of Sarah Milgrim and Yaron Lischinsky at the Capital Jewish Museum right here in Washington, DC, and of Karen Diamond in the firebombing of a gathering in support of Israeli hostages in Boulder, CO, which also injured many other participants, and the attack on Governor Josh Shapiro's home on Seder night. And we have also seen arrests of people allegedly plotting violent attacks on Jewish communities elsewhere in the U.S., in Canada, and in Europe.

Disturbingly, this 2,000 year old hatred has also found its way into our public schools. Not one of T'ruah's members became a rabbi or a cantor imagining that Jewish children in 2025 would attend schools with students—a small minority of students, but still—students who make Nazi salutes, who glorify Nazi symbols, or who justify or even celebrate the deaths of Jews.

Imagine the pain of Jewish parents dropping off their children at school, knowing that they may see swastikas graffitied on school property, encounter classmates performing Nazi salutes, or be texted quizzes called “Zionist or Nazi?” Imagine seeing your child tuck their Jewish star necklace into their shirt after you drop them off at school in the morning, for fear of being singled out for being Jewish. Sadly, this is the reality for some Jewish parents today.

Antisemitism, just like all forms of bigotry, should have no place anywhere, but especially not in public schools. As I mentioned, I grew up going to public schools, and I am a parent of two children in public school, so this is personal for me.

Most schools work hard to ensure that Jewish students and students of all backgrounds receive an education free from bigotry and harassment. But just like we find across every professional sector, including among elected leaders and politicians, there are gaps in some teachers’ and administrators’ understanding of how antisemitism shows up in schools and how it needs to be addressed. I have seen this myself in speaking at orientation sessions for new teachers, as well as by speaking with rabbis and parents. In schools, and other workplaces, some have failed to understand, to take seriously, or to address real instances of antisemitism. I have heard stories about schools turning a blind eye to the seriousness of swastikas drawn in middle school bathrooms, of Jewish children not being allowed alternate dates for tests given on Jewish holidays, of school projects that glorify Hitler, of the public mocking of Israeli deaths, and of demands that Jewish students and teachers disavow any connection to Israel or Israelis.

When antisemitism is not being taken seriously enough, we need to work with institutions, whether they are school districts, universities, professional associations, or political parties, to use the tools we have to deepen understanding and bring more people into the work of fighting antisemitism. Many misperceptions persist about Jews and Judaism, and education is sorely needed both about Jewish history and practice and about the origins, history, and manifestations of antisemitism.

That’s why, a few years ago, T’ruah heavily invested in helping clergy use their influence, leadership skills, and expertise to educate schools and community partners about antisemitism and to do so in a way that makes communities stronger instead of fearful, mistrustful and divided. And it’s why we have trained thousands of people, including educational leaders, in how to recognize and respond to antisemitism. Because if we fight antisemitism in ways that only divide Jews and their neighbors, we are only isolating Jews in ways that sow greater division and that ultimately make Jews less safe.

That's why T'ruah has published [A Very Brief Guide to Antisemitism](#) which I appended to my testimony. This pocket-sized accessible explainer has reached thousands of people and been used by students, university administrators, and elected officials in multiple cities, including here in Congress, who have found it helpful in navigating the difficult terrain around antisemitism. Whether in the halls of Congress or in schools, if we genuinely seek safety, inclusion, and respect for Jews, the response to these gaps in understanding must be education, not punishment.

Where Antisemitism and Political Debate about Israel Overlap

There has been extensive discussion among experts and advocates about how to discern when debates about Israeli policy veer into antisemitism.

In 2024, T'ruah published an updated version of our antisemitism guide, which tackles some of these thorny questions about when criticism of Israel crosses the line into antisemitism, in order to address some of the incidents that have arisen since October 7, 2023. I interrogate real-world examples more closely in a resource created for T'ruah called [Criticism of Israel and Antisemitism: How to Tell Where One Ends and the Other Begins](#).

To be sure, Israel, as a country and a member of the United Nations, can and should be criticized when it violates the international laws to which every nation is obligated. That can include criticism of the Israeli government, Israeli policies, Israeli officials, and the IDF, including regarding conduct during the current war in Gaza. But when people justify or celebrate the deaths of Israeli Jews or use antisemitic tropes to describe Israel and Israeli Jews, that's antisemitism. When anger about Israeli government policy spills over into harassment or violence directed at Jews in the United States, or any other country, that's antisemitism.

There is widespread misunderstanding in this country about the nature of Jews and of antisemitism. It is often not understood, for example, that Jews are not simply a religious group, but a *people*, with a history, a set of ritual and cultural practices, a sacred language and multiple vernaculars, and a homeland. That means that American Jews feel a kinship and responsibility for other Jews across the world, including the half of the Jewish people who live in Israel. And the vast majority of Jews see their concern for Israel and Israelis — including the hostages taken by Hamas — as an expression of their Judaism and Jewish identity.

While T'ruah is active in educating Americans about how antisemitism can seep into discussions and debates, I'd like to be clear that T'ruah very much opposes the codifying of any definition of antisemitism—or any other bigotry—into law. It's not at all essential to increasing the protection of Jews, and it has been a very divisive, counterproductive, and unhelpful distraction. Experts who investigate bigotry, such as the now diminished Office for Civil Rights (OCR), examine the facts of each case, and do not rely merely on single definitions—not of antisemitism, not of racism, not of homophobia, or of any other form of bigotry. Many investigators and adjudicators have utilized T'ruah's guide and other resources to recognize antisemitism and implement policies. They don't need the guidance itself to be frozen or codified into policy.

So I've come to you today with a clear message.

Antisemitism in schools is serious and dangerous. It is so serious that we can't afford to lose sight of the urgent priority to choose remedies that will most immediately help Jewish students.

Our government has embarked on a dangerous, wrongheaded approach that drags the safety of Jewish children into the storm of our culture wars and ultimately subordinates their needs to other political agendas.

No doubt many good people in this room are as enraged about antisemitic incidents in schools as I am and eager to help students. But the current policy responses are taking our country down a path that does more harm than good to Jews, to all students, and to the social fabric that keeps students and families safe. Half a year into this administration, every aspect of the response has made clear that our government is more focused on justifying defunding public education, weakening labor unions, and cracking down on immigrants and foreign visitors than on keeping Jewish children or adults safe.

There is still time to heed the outcry from so many in the Jewish community and in our country and hear their plea to choose better solutions. As a mother, as a rabbi, and as a Jewish community leader fighting antisemitism, I worry about the current federal response. I see a fight against antisemitism that is subordinating the goal of Jewish safety to another political program. Our children deserve better.

We have already seen the ways in which this administration has cynically preyed on the very real fears of the Jewish community in order to defund higher education in ways that make Jews no safer. These include stripping funding from cancer research, attempting to block foreign students—including Israeli students—from studying in the United

States, and making demands of university departments that will weaken the ability of professors to guide their students in thoughtful, informed explorations of history and politics.

As Rabbi David Saperstein said in his testimony before the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions: “...if we want in the long run to prevail in the goal of this [antisemitism] hearing we must preserve and strengthen the public school system of America—with 83% of our students, as well as a sizable proportion of Jewish students attending. If the public school system of America doesn’t make it, then neither will America nor the Jewish community. Addressing the rescue of public education in America must remain a priority of our community, particularly at a time when teachers and principals are feeling under serious attack.”

Jewish Safety Depends on a Pluralistic Democracy

Today, the very real threat of antisemitism is being abused in the most depraved possible way: to dismantle the very democratic institutions and protections that have kept Jews safe. It is these democratic institutions that have created the conditions for Jews to flourish in this country after millennia of marginalization, scapegoating, and abuse in so many other places and times.

The administration’s campaign to center the threat of antisemitism as a catalyst to weaken democracy is taken right out of Project Esther, a plan developed by the Heritage Foundation without participation by Jewish organizations, without significant input by Jews, and without the insights of antisemitism scholars.

This plan weaves together a disparate group of civil society sectors and organizations into what it paints as “terrorist supporters,” making a spurious, counterfactual case that they comprise a “highly organized, global Hamas Support Network” of civil society nonprofits.

The narrative demonizes diversity, equity, and inclusion by wrongly claiming that these initiatives are inherently antisemitic and anti-Israel. That is a dangerous, misleading, and blatant effort to posit institutions of liberal thought and democracy as a threat to Jews and to American civilization. Project Esther claims diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts are trying to “lay siege to our education system, political processes, and government.” In fact, diversity initiatives are intended to ensure that all students, including Jews, can be safe and flourish in diverse environments. I’ve appended to my

statement a link to [a backgrounder on Project Esther](#) prepared by T'ruah in partnership with The Nexus Project.

Jewish safety has always been tied to the strength of democratic institutions and the rule of law. It is America's liberal democracy, including First Amendment protections, that have allowed Jews to flourish in the United States. Jews have suffered disproportionately from policies that have restricted speech in the United States, from the Espionage Act of 1917, which threatened to effectively shut down the Jewish Daily Forward over its opposition to the U.S. entering World War I, to McCarthyism, which broadly painted Jews as disloyal communists.

As [60 of the country's leading civil rights organizations](#), including T'ruah, recently affirmed in a joint statement: "we must ensure that the legitimate fear[s] in the Jewish community—are not exploited to justify inhumane policies or to target those who peacefully exercise their First Amendment rights."

Earlier this spring T'ruah and our partners at J Street released a letter signed by myself and over [550 leading American rabbis and cantors](#) calling for an end to the administration's cynical use of antisemitism as a wedge issue to attack democratic norms and institutions. As we wrote, "History has shown that the safety and flourishing of American Jews are tied directly to the health of our democracy... American Jews have always stood for democracy, free speech, and justice—not just because these values are moral, but because they are essential to our safety and our future." T'ruah rabbis in cities and states across the country have led similar letters in every region of the U.S.

An Approach that Fits the Nature, Magnitude and Urgency of the Problem

If we truly prioritize the immediate need to make students safer, our solutions must reflect that. Below are key principles and guideposts that reflect the experiences of American Jews and the leaders and practitioners focused on their wellbeing.

1. We can't just punish or sanction our way out of this problem. We need schools to be better equipped, not less.

Antisemitism is a feature of American history and permeates our society today, just as it has in so many places for more than 2,000 years. Schools, workplaces, political arenas, and professional associations of any kind are not immune. However, they aren't creating

antisemitism, and there is no such thing as a clearly antisemitic school or union or university.

Schools, teachers, and teachers' unions can and should be part of the solution, in order to ensure that Jewish children can feel safe attending public schools, and that Jewish teachers and administrators can feel safe working in these schools. Schools, school districts, and teachers unions already partner with local and national Jewish communities and organizations to train staff about antisemitism, to bring quality resources on Jewish history, Jewish culture, Jewish practice, and antisemitism into schools, and to foster productive partnerships between schools and local Jewish leaders and communities.

We need more capacity for that, not less. And where the government resources fall short, faith communities and nonprofits are already picking up the slack. I know that T'ruah's 2,300 Jewish clergy welcome opportunities to help schools in their own communities to support Jewish students and faculty.

Jewish community partnership in this effort is essential. But this responsibility should not fall to Jewish nonprofits on their own. If the safety of Jewish students is a priority, let our government invest in the partners and tools that we need to be safe instead of pulling back funds it may be reluctant to spend for other reasons.

2. Prevent Incidents from Happening in the First Place

What's happening to Jewish students and other students targeted by bigotry is infuriating. And when our society and our systems fail to protect them to the fullest extent possible, it's natural to want there to be consequences. But there is simply no remedy more effective than preventing the incident to begin with.

It's critical that Congress has been provided hundreds of millions of dollars for the Nonprofit Security Grants Program for Jewish and other community institutions. And it's essential to ensure that these grants do not come with strings attached that would force our communities to abandon our basic commitments to inclusion and equity as well as to the safety of immigrants. But our communities need a better plan for a secure future than just bullet proof glass and barricades.

And, yet, Congress rarely even talks about, much less invests in, prevention. Calls to fight antisemitism ring hollow when the administration has eliminated almost all the

prevention tools at their disposal. This includes a total of \$46 million in hate crime prevention grants and grants related to helping communities counter violent extremism.

For example, the precursor to antisemitic discrimination and harassment in schools is bullying. Research has shown that when parents, schools, and other adults resolve to prevent bullying, before bigotry turns into harassment, students are safer. What is Congress' investment in bullying prevention? The federal government has a toolkit, most of it archived or suspended, like the website stopbullying.gov. The core [definition](#) and research that drove federal anti-bullying education and prevention was actually developed by the CDC, because the institution that is meant to be a guardian of our children's health once understood bullying prevention is essential to children's wellbeing.

That is just one of the prevention functions gutted as we allow our broken politics to implode almost every public system designed to protect our youth, including from the harm of antisemitism.

3. Eroding Democracy Endangers Jews

We must reject the falsehood that Jews can be protected by abrogating any rights or freedoms. History has made clear that Jews are better off when democratic norms and institutions and protections of individual and collective rights are strong.

As worried as many Jews are about rising antisemitism, most are even more afraid of the erosion of their constitutional rights—rights we have long relied on to keep us safe. In April, a survey of U.S. Jews revealed that the vast [majority do not approve of the administration's approach to antisemitism](#).

Educational institutions are crucial to democracy. Schools are America's strongholds of critical inquiry and free speech, and civic education—teaching our children to be citizens of a great participatory democracy and to freely interrogate ideas. Vilifying our teachers,

school systems and the associations and unions that support them doesn't make any Jew safer.

4. Jews Need Policy and Programs Promoting Inclusion, Equity, and Respect

Jews cannot be safe in a country that is unsafe for other minorities. The assault on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion ultimately doesn't increase Jewish safety. Those programs must better serve Jews, not be eliminated.

Jewish Americans are anything but immune from harm caused by the administration's attack on diversity programs. Beyond the fact that many Jews are also transgender, people of color, immigrants, and disabled, many of the new orders directly affect Jewish communities. These include an Executive Order on ["Eradicating anti-Christian Bias,"](#) which points at an intention to weaken the Separation of Church and State in ways that will inevitably result in particular forms of Christianity being imposed on students and a [Pentagon memo](#) pausing commemorations of Holocaust Memorial Day, along with Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and other events tied to non-white Christian groups. And, as was the case in President Trump's first administration, implicit endorsement of white nationalists, some of whom have used violence against Jewish and other minority communities, is dangerous.

5. Reject Solutions that Isolate Jews or Invite Scapegoating

Jews need allies in other communities to thrive. We hear constantly how a lack of allyship is affecting Jews' wellbeing.

The administration's singular focus on antisemitism—to the exclusion of other forms of bigotry—singles out Jewish students and can even make them feel less safe. Some Jewish students have expressed fear they will be scapegoated for harsh measures taken in their name. For example, defunding medical research does nothing to keep Jews safe, but it is inevitable that some observers will come to blame the lack of medical research funding on the Jewish community, in whose name this administration purports to act.

Today, others may be playing the role of the scapegoat in America: immigrants, foreign students, LGBTQ people. But scapegoating is a toxic impulse that harms all of us. The impulse to demonize, scapegoat, and foment fear of segments of our community will not stop with one group—it never does.

6. Jewish Safety Requires Social Solidarity and Togetherness

We cannot effectively bar discrimination against Jews unless the mechanisms to counter discrimination are robust enough to address discrimination against all protected groups. Both ethically, and, as a practical matter, they are linked. For example, Department of Education Title VI investigations of antisemitism have often uncovered gaps in the protections of other students targeted by bigotry as well. This is why a number of OCR resolution agreements with schools address not only antisemitic

harassment but also address other forms of harassment. The reality is that no one's children are safe unless everyone's children are safe.

One reason that the White House National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism was so widely embraced across political divides, including within the Jewish community, is because the strategy embraced the Jewish community's experience that social solidarity is a key component of ensuring their safety.

I was honored to be one of the over 1,000 Jewish communal leaders, experts and practitioners involved in consulting with the Biden administration to craft a comprehensive White House National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism. This strategy, crafted before October 7, was the first of this kind by any White House. It addressed antisemitism at every level of government and society, and offered the most comprehensive body of specific recommendations in America's history for ensuring that schools, workplaces, and other environments were safe places for Jewish students.

We deeply regret that Congressional majority leadership and the administration have ignored or dismissed this comprehensive strategy out of hand. Project Esther describes it as "appear[ing] to have more to do with furthering the progressive left's obsession with LGBTQ+ and all other minorities than it has to do with anything substantive in countering antisemitism."

My role, and the role of all Jewish leaders, is to work with every political leader to engage them in whatever parts of their policy platforms leave room for cooperation and shared interests. So it's with a heavy heart that I note that, in the past 8 months, the administration has abandoned the 2023 White House National Strategy's concrete recommendations based on evidence and practical experience, developed in partnership with Jewish community leaders. In exchange, our community is being offered inflammatory rhetoric and the attempted evisceration of the institutions we need most.

In our time of need, we are being held hostage to a political agenda that isn't about us, and we are being treated as pawns in a broader effort to dismantle the liberal democracy that has made the United States strong and that has allowed people of all backgrounds to flourish here.

7. Prevent Potential Assailants from Obtaining Firearms

While most of the antisemitic incidents that have taken place in schools and other Jewish communities have not involved firearms, guns provide the means for

hate-motivated individuals to turn their bias into murder. In fact, data suggests that over [25,000 hate crimes per year involve a firearm](#). This includes the murders of Jews worshipping in Pittsburgh, PA, in 2018 and in Poway, CA, in 2019, at a kosher grocery store in Jersey City in 2019, and outside the Capital Jewish Museum here in DC earlier this year.

We have also seen armed assailants murder members of Black, Asian, LGBTQ, Muslim, Sikh, Latino, and other immigrant communities. According to the [National Crime Victimization Survey](#), each year more than 10,000 people are victims of hate crimes involving guns. In 2020, then FBI Director Chris Wray [testified](#) before the Senate Homeland Security Committee that violent extremists motivated by racial or religious hatred make up a significant portion of the FBI's domestic terrorism investigations, and that the majority of those attacks are motivated by violent white supremacist ideologies.

While gun violence prevention is outside of the jurisdiction of this committee, it is important to note more broadly that gun safety laws, which this administration has actively weakened, could reduce the incidence of deadly hate crimes. These should include robust background checks and the closing of loopholes in federal law, including one that allows thousands of people each year who are legally prohibited from possessing firearms to purchase such weapons before the completion of their background checks. In 28 states, people convicted of violent hate crime misdemeanors are still eligible to purchase firearms.

9. A Plea to the U.S. Government: Lead by Example

If we are to advance the solutions that can most help students, we desperately need the government to lead by example. Our government cannot credibly conduct oversight of the harm of antisemitism in institutions under its jurisdiction until the administration and Members of Congress themselves resolve to take the same stands on antisemitism that they are asking of schools, universities, unions, and other entities.

Just as we acknowledge the power and influence of a teacher's words or selection of texts in a classroom, our government's voice and its selection of personnel set the moral tone for our country.

When the 2023 White House National Strategy activated every government agency in mobilizing a society-wide rejection of antisemitism, agencies from the Veterans Administration to the Department of Agriculture were engaging veterans and farm communities in learning about and speaking out against antisemitism. Now Jews must watch as there is utter silence and tacit approval for the most base antisemitism

embraced, tolerated, and sometimes even signaled by members of the administration who have not been removed from their positions or have even been promoted.

An administration truly dedicated to Jewish protection would not be inhabited by [Cabinet members](#) and staff who openly espouse antisemitic and other bigoted beliefs or pardon members of antisemitic militia groups among the [Jan. 6 insurrectionists](#). Administration appointments of supporters of antisemitic conspiracy theories, white supremacy, and Christian nationalism are no anomaly or oversight. It is a pattern:

- Director of the National Counterterrorism Center Joe Kent [has ties](#) to neo-Nazis and white nationalists. In 2022, Kent accused Jewish American pro-Israel advocates of dual loyalty, noting the candidate “owes a foreign country, not her constituents.” Invoking an antisemitic trope about Jewish control of U.S. politics, Kent wrote that “...taking their money puts their interests ahead of ours.”
- [DOD press secretary Kingsley Wilson](#) is a prolific purveyor of antisemitic conspiracy theories yet has been promoted twice, even as the Jewish community and the media have exposed her antisemitism.
- Ed Martin, whose [praise for notorious antisemites](#) was publicly aired during his nomination to be a U.S. Attorney, now serves as the Department of Justice Pardon Attorney.

What used to be taboos against Nazism are being broken all over this administration. That’s why it’s so disheartening that the President has never been called to account for dining with the antisemite Nick Fuentes, who has declared “I love Hitler” in front of audiences and said “Talmudic Jews need to either leave the country or be converted” and who speaks about the “bastardized Jewish subversion of the American creed.”

Accusing Jews of being disloyal is an age-old antisemitic trope. That’s why Jews were so shocked when, in 2024, then-candidate Trump suggested that, if he lost the election, it would be because of the Jews. In October 2022, he warned American Jews to “get their act together” and show more appreciation for his policies toward Israel. He has called Jewish voters who didn’t vote for him “greatly disloyal” and has declared that “any Jewish person that votes for Democrats hates their religion.” I can tell you as a rabbi that Judaism does not dictate which party to vote for but does offer detailed instructions for establishing a just society that aims to protect the dignity, safety, and wellbeing of every single one of its members.

Project 2025, which multiple members of this administration played a strong role in crafting, breaks down the separation of Church and State that has been fundamental to this country since its founding, and that has allowed Jews and members of other minority religious groups to flourish here. This plan privileges Christian students and teachers in ways that will make schools less comfortable for Jewish and other non-Christian students. We have already seen this administration support the increased infiltration of Christian practice into schools, including through prayer, Christian Bible study, and the display of the Christian version of the Ten Commandments.

Based on the model of Project 2025, many states have already instituted book bans, some of which ban books on the Holocaust, as well as books that honor the heritage of other minority groups.

In January, the Pentagon's intelligence arm (DIA) indefinitely paused the observation of Holocaust Remembrance Day, along with other observances like Martin Luther King Jr. Day, to comply with the administration's executive directive ending federal programs on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the military.

The Hebrew Bible offers strong guidance for what it means to be a just and wise leader. When the people first approach the Prophet Samuel to ask for a king, the prophet warns them of the danger that a king will only amass power and wealth for himself rather than tend to the needs of the people. King David, the most storied king of Jewish history, proves his fitness for the position by serving as a shepherd and caring for vulnerable creatures. As king, he is said to do *mishpat utzedakah*—to act with justice and righteousness. We ask nothing less from our leaders in Congress today.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Use the U.S. National Strategy. Congress has the benefit of a comprehensive roadmap for countering antisemitism. The [National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism](#) offers over 100 specific recommendations and was developed with input from over a thousand ideologically diverse Jewish community leaders and experts. At the time of its release, in May 2023, the National Strategy was welcomed by Jewish leaders across the ideological spectrum and by elected officials from both parties. It should not be cast aside simply because it came about during a different administration. Doing so only sets back the cause of Jewish students' safety.

Here are some key recommendations, many of which stem from areas covered by the 2023 White House National Strategy. These are recommendations for Congress generally, and not necessarily within the jurisdiction of this committee.

1. **Speak out against antisemitism even when it's uncomfortable.** Your words matter. The most immediate and powerful tool you have is your microphone to set a moral tone. If we are asking schools, unions, and movements to call out antisemitism and fight it in their own institutions, we expect our government leaders to have the same moral courage.
2. **Restore government tools and resources.** The Department of Education's [Office for Civil Rights](#), the office specifically charged with investigating bias complaints in school and monitoring schools' compliance, has been eviscerated. It has lost the funding and capacity necessary to conduct thorough investigations and monitor compliance of schools. By shuttering regional offices, slashing budgets and reducing experienced personnel, our government has lost critical resources, expertise, and experience just when it is most needed.
3. **Restore support for hate crimes and violence prevention.** This year's federal budget includes not one dollar of funding for hate crime prevention. While hate crimes against Jews have increased more than 90% over the last decade, the administration has cut dozens of grants for hate crime prevention, overriding the explicit intent of Congress, which passed the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act and COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act, which included the Khalid Jabara and Heather Heyer NO HATE Act. The funding cuts implemented by this administration encompass virtually every existing program to support improved hate crime prevention, education and awareness, response, reporting, as well as hate crimes victim support.
4. **Recognize that fighting one kind of hate alone is neither moral nor effective.** Acknowledge that rising antisemitism is part of a broader rise in hate targeting other groups. Addressing these hatreds requires a broad, inclusive effort across society.
5. **Invest in and strengthen education instead of sanctioning it.** We simply cannot punish our way out of the gaps in awareness about Jewish identity, Jewish experiences, and antisemitism. For Jewish community organizations like T'ruah, the ability to work with school districts and labor unions is the most immediate and effective way to open hearts and minds and to raise awareness about antisemitism in a measurable way. I know of no other way we could reach millions of educators without organizations like the American Federation of Teachers or the National Education Association promoting resources and educating teachers. That has a more immediate material impact on Jewish students in schools than punitive action against their school district or their

teacher's own union.

6. **Equip young people to engage with new ideas and learn together across differences.** We as a society are polarized and ill-equipped to communicate with each other to problem solve, deliberate issues and to know each other. We have to do more to give students the skills to discuss issues across disagreement and to open their minds and hearts to a different narrative or idea. In this effort, we've been gratified by how many schools and unions like NEA and AFT have promoted T'ruah's own guide and other resources and tools from groups like Facing History and Ourselves, including tools for difficult conversations about Israel's war with Hamas. Teaching students to engage in conversation about Israel's war in ways that reject antisemitic rhetoric and stereotypes, or any policy issue, should be a core part of civic education.
7. **Cease using Jewish safety as a pretext for the detention, abduction or denial of due process to foreign students, and stop fueling the xenophobic demonizing of immigrants, which is an affront to Jewish interests and values.** It is quite simply an affront to our values, our faith, and our own history as people who found safe haven in this country as immigrants and refugees. Listen to the voices of hundreds of Jewish clergy across the country who have spoken clearly in [opposition](#) to the indefinite suspension of refugee admissions, to the arrest of foreign students, and to the [ICE raids](#) destroying their communities.

It's difficult and uncomfortable for the Jewish community, or any minority who needs protection, to come out against our government's stated attempt to help make us safe. It's not what any Jewish leader ever expected to do. As palpable and serious as our fear of antisemitic discrimination and even violence is, our fear of losing the blanket of protections that democracy has afforded us is just as strong.

We need solutions that actually protect Jewish students while strengthening the institutions that have allowed American Jews and so many communities to flourish in our country—like public education. Thank you for your attention to this critical task of ensuring that no student misses out on all that their education can give them because of unchecked antisemitism or any form of identity-based discrimination or harassment.

APPENDIX. Additional Background and Resources

Resources from T'ruah and Rabbi Jill Jacobs

- About [T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights](#)
- T'ruah's [“A Very Brief Guide to Antisemitism”](#), published January 2022, updated 2024
- [“Criticism of Israel and Antisemitism: How to Tell Where One Ends and the Other Begins”](#) by Rabbi Jill Jacobs, 2024
- [“Trump is using antisemitism as pretext to attack higher education, undermine democracy”](#) by Rabbi Jill Jacobs, Boston Globe, March 21, 2025
- [“How to tell when criticism of Israel is actually anti-Semitism”](#) by Rabbi Jill Jacobs, Washington Post, May 18, 2018
- Video: [Rabbi Jill Jacobs on Countering Antisemitism for the United Nations' #NoToHate Series](#), June 6, 2025
- [“‘Project Esther’: Exploiting Jewish Fear to Advance Dangerous Policy.”](#) T'ruah and The Nexus Project, March 2025

T'ruah and Jewish Community Statements

- [Rabbis Respond to Trump Administration Executive Order on Antisemitism](#), January 30, 2025
- [Rabbis Reject President Trump's Use of Antisemitism As Wedge to Dismantle Democracy](#), April 8, 2025
- [Hundreds of Rabbis Condemn President Trump's Exploitation of Genuine Fears of Antisemitism](#), April 28, 2025
- [Rejecting the False Choice between Jewish Safety and Democracy](#), April 15, 2025

- [T'ruah and nearly 40 Jewish groups' joint statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#), February 7, 2025
- [Statement from over 100 Jewish organizations](#) on Recent Attacks on Democratic Norms and Values, February 7, 2025

Additional Resources

- [Jewish Senators Letter to President Trump on the Weaponization of Antisemitism](#), April 24, 2025
- [What Does Dismantling the Education Department Mean for Jewish Safety and Democracy?](#), Jewish Council for Public Affairs Fact Sheet on Jewish Safety and the Department of Education, March 20, 2025
- [President Trump Is Not a King: Congress Must Stop His Attack on Education](#), National Council of Jewish Women, March 20, 2025
- [Why Trump's attack on democracy is as deep a Jewish concern as antisemitism or Israel](#) by Dr. Yehuda Kurtzer, President of Shalom Hartman Institute of North America, March 3, 2025