

HJ0005 – FAV

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Good afternoon.

My name is Evie Frankl and I'm here to request a favorable report on HJ0005.

HJ0005 asks the state of MD to affirm its commitment to Free Speech, Academic Freedom and Open Public Discourse.

I am here to tell you this is not the current state of things and it is deeply troubling.

Montgomery County is a mess. When you talk with public officials or school officials privately they will tell you that everyone is afraid of being accused of antisemitism.

This body is the same. I have been told confidentially by member after member that everyone is afraid to talk about any of the bills pertaining to antisemitism, Islamophobia, Israel, ceasefire or free speech because they are afraid of being accused of antisemitism.

Everyone in this room knows this is true.

You also know that Freedom of Speech is enshrined in the Bill of Rights. But right now in Maryland and in the US, it's sort of "Speak, but Beware the Consequences. Beware your job. Your funding. Your second term." You all remember what happened to the president of Harvard. The president of Harvard, for goodness sake.

We are in a time reminiscent of McCarthyism. We are coming close to naming names. Who is an antisemite?

I am the daughter of Holocaust refugees – my parents and infant brother got out, by the skin of their teeth. I am the granddaughter of non-survivors – my grandparents were killed at Auschwitz. I am the niece and grandniece of camp survivors – my aunt was raped by her guards and never able to have children – only one of the horrors she suffered.

Will they call me antisemitic after this testimony?

This atmosphere is dangerous. It encourages hurt and resentment to fester.

Antisemitism is real, but it is not in discussion of Palestinian lives lost. It is not in criticism of the policies and actions of the Israeli government. It is a part of the broad broom of white supremacy sweeping this country and many countries of Europe and other parts of the world. It is dangerous and vile.

But we Jews are also rich with allies, if only we can breathe, notice that we are safe, most of the time, in most places, especially relative to many others, and hold out our hands to those waiting to reach back out.

Let's protect free speech and open public discourse and return a favorable report on HJ0005.