

Joseph Stein
Baltimore, MD 21211
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Written Testimony: HB 1462: UNFAVOURABLE

I am a graduate student worker in the Political Science Department at Johns Hopkins University, a proud member and steward of the graduate student union (TRU UE-197), a life-long anti-Zionist Jew, and a rank-and-file member of the Jewish Voice for Peace and Jews for Racial and Economic Justice. However, I am writing only on my own behalf, and not on behalf of JHU, TRU, JVP, or JFREJ.

This bill's time/place/manner restrictions would radically restrict my free speech and the collective free speech of graduate student workers under the guise of antidiscrimination. It is plainly a response to the joyous and righteous upsurge of solidarity with the people of Palestine over the past year. This would be problematic at the best of times, but it is particularly dangerous today, in the early days of the Trump Administration's fascist auto-coup. Restricting free speech *now*, in this climate, is extraordinarily dangerous and short-sighted. If we are to beat back this auto-coup, civil society must be as strong as possible. By making it harder to organise ourselves, this bill undermines the very networks that will be most crucial in the ongoing struggle for democracy.

I am especially concerned about the requirement that institutions commit to involving security forces. Campus police are already deadly. Requiring the police to intervene is escalatory and *will* result in injured or dead students. Whatever the intentions of this bill, I am convinced that inviting force against free expression plays directly into the hands of the fascists attempting to consolidate control of this country.

Finally, it is my opinion that collective bargaining is the correct forum in which undergraduate students, graduate student workers, and faculty and staff should determine protest policies at universities. The current Collective Bargaining Agreement between the graduate student workers and administration of Johns Hopkins University guarantees our right to peaceful protest. I worry that this bill would interfere with that right and undermine our contract, and that it will pre-empt future CBAs at JHU or other Maryland universities from protecting free expression. Graduate student workers spent years agitating for our CBA, and countless hours at the bargaining table. The prospect of the General Assembly undermining the rights that we fought so long for, is galling.

For these reasons and more, please vote NO on HB 1462.