

HB521 State Procurement - Commercial Nondiscrimination Policy - Antisemitism

Position: Unfavorable

February 18, 2025

Dear Chair Joseline A. Peña-Melnyk and members of the Health Government Relations Committee,

My name is Liz Cabrera Holtz. As a lifelong Maryland resident who cares about protecting people of all faiths, I'm extremely concerned about the reference in the IHRA definition in the preamble of this bill. The reference is not intended to protect Jewish people, it's intended to stifle criticism of the country of Israel.

As horrific images and videos continue to come out of Gaza, I'm dismayed my state would consider censoring statements about Israel. Italy has stopped arms sales to Israel. Pope Francis has called for an investigation into "genocide" (his words) in Gaza. On February 13th, some of the most well-known Jewish creatives, including Joaquin Phoenix and playwright Tony Kushner, joined 350 rabbis, and ran a full-page ad in The New York Times called, "Jewish People Say No to Ethnic Cleansing." It is clear that viewpoints about Israel vary widely. Why is Maryland moving to stop people from calling out human rights violations?

For this reason, I urge an unfavorable report.