



Jewish Community
Relations Council
MILWAUKEE
JEWISH FEDERATION

Sept. 28, 2025

Dear Jewish Community Members and Allies:

TAKE ACTION NOW: Urge Wisconsin's legislators to support passage of [AB446](#) to help respond to the rise of antisemitism in our community and throughout Wisconsin!

We are once again asking for your help in contacting Wisconsin legislators to support the passage of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism as a tool to define and respond to the rise of antisemitism in our community and throughout Wisconsin, known as Bill AB446.

Opponents of this legislation seek to paint this as a partisan issue claiming the intent of the bill is to silence free speech. This accusation is not accurate. Hate isn't a political issue; it's a societal issue. We hope you will take time to read through this advocacy alert to learn the facts about IHRA, why the Milwaukee Jewish Federation supports AB446, and how you can help ensure its successful passage.

What is IHRA?

Simply put: The IHRA definition is meant to be used as a tool to identify instances of antisemitism.

It is the broadly used, nonbinding working definition relied on by the United Nations, the U.S. State Department (in both Democrat and Republican Administrations) and is widely referenced by democratic governments and major institutions around the world. Leading Jewish organizations in the United States, including American Jewish Committee, Jewish Federations of North America, the Conference of Presidents of American Jewish Organizations, the World Jewish Congress, B'nai B'rith, and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, publicly support IHRA.

What IHRA Does NOT Do:

- It does NOTHING to infringe on First Amendment Rights.
- The IHRA cannot be used to punish protected expression, even if that expression is antisemitic or anti-Zionist.
- The IHRA does not limit free speech. The First Amendment safeguard ensures that offensive or hostile speech remains protected unless tied to an otherwise unlawful act such as threats, vandalism, or assault.
- The IHRA does NOT criminalize criticism of the Israeli government or Israeli political leaders.
- The IHRA is NOT itself a law and violating it is not punishable.



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What does the IHRA do?

The IHRA Definition outlines several common manifestations of what it states could be defined as antisemitism and includes context as a critical factor. This includes the targeting of Jewish individuals, institutions, or property; denying the Jewish people the right to self-determination; claiming the existence of a Jewish conspiracy; and questioning that the Holocaust occurred among others.

The definition is about clarity, not censorship.

Key Components of the Wisconsin Bill

- It applies to all state agencies, local governments, and their employees. School districts are explicitly included.
- It only directs officials to consider the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism and its examples when assessing potential antisemitic incidents.
- It guides the evaluation of discriminatory intent when applying:
 - Existing anti-discrimination laws, ordinances, or policies.
 - On its own the IHRA definition is not a law and violating it carries no punishment UNLESS antisemitism was a factor in the carrying out of other crimes such as assault, vandalism, murder, or other illegal actions.
- ***It states clearly that nothing in the bill may infringe on First Amendment rights or conflict with federal or state anti-discrimination laws.***

Your Voice

AB446 is being considered by the Wisconsin Legislature right now. We are asking members of the Jewish community and our allies to please reach out to your State Senator and Representative by phone or email TODAY. If you do not know who your legislators are, or need their contact information, you can do a search at [Find Your Legislator](#).

We need you to reach out to your State Senate and Assembly members with the following critical points:

1. Let them know you strongly support the passage of AB446 which adopts the IHRA definition of antisemitism as a tool to help fight the ongoing rise we're seeing globally
2. Wisconsin's reported antisemitic incidents reflect a cumulative increase of 459% since 2015, a staggering rise that shows no signs of reversing course. Despite this data, as a society we continue to struggle with what constitutes antisemitism — having a global framework as a starting point is critical.



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3. The IHRA definition is the broadly used, working definition relied on by the United Nations, the U.S. State Department (in both Democratic and Republican Administrations), and is widely referenced by democratic governments and major institutions around the world.
4. The various criticisms of the IHRA definition have been repeatedly addressed and debunked by international experts such as Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt, former U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism in the Biden administration, who has publicly defended IHRA and encouraged the United Nations to continue global implementation. An article about this appears [here](#).
5. It is critical to note:
 - a. This legislation does not infringe on free speech; it specifically states multiple times that it is expressly not designed to limit free speech.
 - b. This legislation does not punish critics of Israel or Jews. Though critics will point to this potential, we cannot base our laws upon fears that a law will be abused. When any law is abused, we must call it out as a society and address the consequences of any abuse.
 - c. The law is very clear – it does not apply to everyday speech, whether antisemitic and hateful or gracious and kind. The law itself repeats its commitment to free speech, and we recognize that free speech includes hate speech.

In the last eighteen months, the world has witnessed a disturbing and unprecedented surge in antisemitic rhetoric, violence, and harassment. Jewish communities around the globe - on campuses, in public spaces, online, and even in the workplace - have reported a dramatic escalation in hate-fueled incidents. To respond effectively, societies need clear definitions and consistent frameworks. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism has emerged as a vital tool in this fight. It provides practical guidelines that help governments, law enforcement, educators, and institutions recognize and confront antisemitism in all its modern forms.

Calling out antisemitism is not a matter of politics; it is a matter of principle and a matter of collective responsibility.

Thank you for your advocacy, and your support.