

Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-7012

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A WORKING GROUP TO ADDRESS ANTISEMITISM

Title: IN SCHOOLS.

Vote Date: 3/21/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/26/2025

File No.: 594

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill is proposed to address instances of antisemitism in the state's public schools. To achieve this, the bill will establish a working group that will provide support and resources to the state Department of Education, local and regional boards of education, and other stakeholders to address issues of antisemitism affecting students, their families, educators, and school staff. The working group will include representatives from both the Jewish community and the broader educational community, and its members will be appointed on a bipartisan basis. If established, the working group will report on its activities no later than February 1, 2025, and will recommend legislation to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

The substitute replaces "anti-Semitism" with "antisemitism" throughout the bill.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Connecticut State Dept. of Education, Commissioner, Charlene Russell-Tucker](#): supports the bill because the department has been a longstanding supporter of the development of resources to support the important education of studying the Holocaust and genocides.

[Connecticut General Assembly, Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity, and Opportunity, \(CWCSEO\) Childrens Policy Analyst, TJ Nuccio](#): supports the bill and says that the Commission would be inclined to serve on the working group but stresses the importance

for the Education Committee to address issues related to both antisemitism and all forms of hate speech that may affect students, families, educators, and school personnel. They say FBI data shows in the past five years, hate crimes increased in schools, with the most frequent victims being Black, LGBTQ+ and Jewish students.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Peace Educator, International Student, Hannah Belsky](#): supports the bill because they are a Jewish mother and a student in Peacebuilding at Hartford International University. They suggest teaching children that Jews are a diverse group, with a wide variety of differing views, and when defining antisemitism, ensuring they understand that silencing dissent deepens division. They also point out that while they do crucial work, the Anti-Defamation League and the Jewish Federation do not represent all Jews and feels all Jews of differing views must be included in the fight against antisemitism. They say children should also be taught to resist the idea that teaching facts will reduce antisemitism and encouraged to promote accountability, learning, and courageous conversation over punishment where possible.

[CEA, Vice President, Joslyn DeLancey](#): support the intent of the legislation to address what they say has been a proliferation of hate speech among youth and in our communities. The Jewish faith, they argue, is particularly impacted. They believe the legislation will ensure that young people are aware of the history of Jewish persecution and, hopefully, end what they say has been a trend of antisemitic sentiment. They also support laws that ensure education on the Holocaust and other genocides is taught in schools. Furthermore, they advocate for expanding the language of the bill to focus on the impact of hate more clearly on people sharing any racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, or national identity.

[Lauren Field](#): supports the bill stating as a Jewish mother of two children and the Co-Founder of the Fairfield Jewish Advocacy Coalition, she believes it is necessary. She notes that there has been a rise in antisemitic incidents across the state, the country, and abroad in recent years, and she feels the bill will address this issue. She recommends that the committee make the following modifications to the bill. First, she points out that the correct spelling of "antisemitism" is without the hyphen. While she believes the recommended appointees to the working group are appropriate, she emphasizes the need for crucial stakeholders, such as parents and vetted K-12 antisemitism subject matter experts, to be included. She also suggests adding or replacing other organizations mentioned in the legislation with the AJC (American Jewish Committee) and stand with us. Additionally, instead of having the Hartford Federation on the working group, she proposes that all eight federations collaborate with leadership to determine which one should be represented.

[Connecticut Catholic Conference, Executive Director, Chris Healy](#): supports the bill stating that it is a necessary step to enlighten young people on the bigotry suffered by members of the Jewish faith. They say the legislation will ensure young people are aware of the history of Jewish persecution and hopefully end a trend of antisemitic sentiment.

[FJAC, Dr. Mindy Hersh](#): supports the bill stating that the establishment of a working group to address antisemitism is necessary.

[Jewish Federation of Eastern, CT, Antisemitism Committee, Sheila S. Horvitz](#): supports the bill stating there has been a huge increase in antisemitic incidents in CT over the past two years, and they fear for the safety of the Jewish community. They say such incidents have had a particular impact on eroding a sense of safety and belonging for Jewish students in state high schools.

[Marjorie Jacobson](#): supports the bill stating that ADL Connecticut has recorded a 670% increase in antisemitic incidents statewide in the past four years, with 20-30% of those occurring in K-12 schools. They say the bill will ensure that schools are better equipped to prevent and respond to antisemitic incidents.

[Leah Katz](#): they fully support the creation of a working group to address what they say are a rise in antisemitic incidents throughout the state and ensure the safety of children in public schools. They are the child of a parent who grew up in Nazi Germany. They say ADL Connecticut has recorded a 670% increase in antisemitic incidents statewide in the past four years, with 20-30% of those occurring in K-12 schools. They say the bill will ensure that schools are better equipped to prevent and respond to antisemitic incidents.

[Grassroots Jewish Women of Connecticut, Robin Kipnis](#): supports the bill and they applaud the creation of a working group the bill would create to combat antisemitism in schools. They have multiple suggestions for enhancing the bill, including ensuring antisemitism is spelled without the hyphen, the definition of the word should be defined to include bullying and harassment, they feel there needs to be broader representation in the working group including parents and other organizations in the state, clarification that the working group is subject to FOIA requests, ensuring all materials and recommendations of the working group are made public, clearly specifying how matters are brought to the attention of the working group, and implementing wording into the legislation that provides mechanisms for ensuring that the work of the group is actually considered and implemented in schools.

[Nina Kunkes](#): supports the bill stating that they are the mother of two Jewish boys, and they say antisemitism is on the rise, citing recent events such as the Oct. 7th terrorist attack in Israel. They say education is crucial for a moral society and feel that the bill is needed not just to protect Jewish students, but for all children to grow up knowing both the harm of hatred, and that hatred will always be resisted.

[Rabbi The Emanuel Synagogue, Phillip Lazowski](#): supports the bill stating that they are a Rabbi and a Holocaust survivor, and they note in their experiences in the Holocaust, hatred for Jews also led to hatred and harms for other groups that were designated as enemies in Nazi Germany. They say ADL Connecticut has recorded a 670% increase in antisemitic incidents statewide in the past four years, with 20-30% of those occurring in K-12 schools. They say the bill will ensure that schools are better equipped to prevent and respond to antisemitic incidents.

[Tara Littman](#): supports the bill stating that they are a Jewish mother of three children and an advisor to the Fairfield Jewish Advocacy Coalition (FJAC) and feel the bill is needed to combat what they say has been a rise in antisemitism in recent years. They suggest the committee modify the bill with the following changes. They say the proper way to spell antisemitism is without the hyphen. They add while they feel the recommended appointees to the working group are appropriate, they feel crucial stakeholders, such as parents and vetted

K-12 antisemitism subject matter experts. They also suggest either adding or replacing other mentioned organizations in the legislation as written with the AJC (American Jewish Committee) and Stand with Us. They also suggest instead of having the Hartford Federation on the working group, they feel all eight federations should work with leadership to determine which one is represented on the working group.

[Sara Moeller](#): supports the bill because, they say there has been a rise in antisemitic incidents nationwide recently, and they feel the bill is a proactive step to ensure our schools remain safe and inclusive environments for all students.

[Michelle Noehren](#): supports the bill because, they say there is a rise in antisemitic incidents nationwide, and the bill represents a proactive step to ensure our schools remain safe and inclusive environments for all students.

[UConn Hillel, Executive Director, Edina Oestreicher](#): supports the bill because, they are personally aware of the impact antisemitism can have on college students, citing examples they've experienced at UConn. They feel the bill is needed to ensure that students feel safe both physically, and to express their Jewish identity.

[Jewish Teen Learning Connection, Executive Director, Caroline Poland](#): supports the bill because, they have heard firsthand accounts from Jewish teenagers who have experienced antisemitism in their schools, and they say antisemitic incidents in our schools have increased in frequency in the last few years. They hope that the bill will address and decrease instances of antisemitic behavior in our schools, and would like to see the working group include more diverse representation of the Jewish community, including Jewish parents.

[Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents \(CAPSS\), Executive Director, Fran Rabinowitz](#): supports the bill because, they say it represents a proactive, collaborative solution to combat antisemitism in schools and that is designed as a supportive measure, rather than an onerous mandate, that restores educator autonomy by providing essential guidance and resources, without imposing additional legislative burdens.

[Amy Rashba](#): supports the bill because, they say ADL Connecticut has recorded a 670% increase in antisemitic incidents statewide in the past four years, with 20-30% of those occurring in K-12 schools. They say the bill will ensure that schools are better equipped to prevent and respond to antisemitic incidents.

[Fairfield Jewish Advocacy \(FJAC\), Co-Founder, Laurie Renzulli](#): supports the bill because, they feel the bill is needed to combat what they say has been a rise in antisemitism in recent years. They suggest the committee modify the bill with the following changes. They say the proper way to spell antisemitism is without the hyphen. They add while they feel the recommended appointees to the working group are appropriate, they feel crucial stakeholders, such as parents and vetted K-12 antisemitism subject matter experts. They also suggest either adding or replacing other mentioned organizations in the legislation as written with the AJC (American Jewish Committee) and Stand with Us. They also suggest instead of having the Hartford Federation on the working group, they feel all eight federations should work with leadership to determine which one is represented on the working group.

[Greater Hartford for Israel, Ari Schaffer](#): supports the bill because, they say that FBI data shows the Jewish community is the target of 63% of religiously motivated hate crimes in the US, and cite data from the ADL showing antisemitic hate crimes jumped 200% in the year following the Oct. 7 terrorist attack in Israel. They say the bill shows the Connecticut Jewish community, and all those who stand against antisemitism, that the state legislature will do what it can to keep antisemitism out of schools.

[ADL Connecticut, Regional Director, Stacey Sobel](#): supports the bill because, they say there has been a 670% increase in antisemitic incidents statewide in the past four years, with 20-30% of these occurring in K-12 schools, with a 135% rise in incidents in K-12 schools in the past year alone nationally. They say the legislation is important and will provide resources, policy and curricular materials to the Dept. of Education and other education stakeholders. They also wish the wording of the word antisemitism in the legislation to be modified with a removed hyphen.

[Jay Tulin](#): supports the bill because, they are a member Government outreach task forces with the AJC and JCRC. They say it is critical that students are afforded the opportunity for every possible protection from what they say is a rise in antisemitic incidents throughout the US.

[Deborah Weinstein](#): supports the bill because, they feel it is critical for students to feel safe in school and they say antisemitic incidents have recently dramatically increased.

[Darien Public Schools, Superintendent of Schools, Alan Addley](#): supports the bill because, they say it represents a proactive, collaborative solution to combat antisemitism in schools. They request the bill be amended to include a Superintendent of Schools as a member of the Working Group, saying their unique perspectives would contribute meaningfully.

[ADL, Regional Board Chair, Suzanne Batchelor Pinkes](#): supports the bill because, they say the ADL indicates via research that as many as 20% of Americans hold antisemitic attitudes or beliefs, and they say antisemitic incidents are on the rise statewide and nationally. They say ADL Connecticut has recorded a 670% increase in antisemitic incidents statewide in the past four years, with 20-30% of those occurring in K-12 schools. They say the bill will ensure that schools are better equipped to prevent and respond to antisemitic incidents and promote a safer learning environment.

[Jewish Federations of North America, State Director, Government Relations, Eli Berne](#): supports the bill because, they say it is a vital step towards ensuring Jewish staff and students in schools can teach, and learn in safe, inclusive environments. They say there has been a recent rise in antisemitic incidents in schools across America and this bill addresses the issue head-on. They especially appreciate the focus on Holocaust and genocide education.

[Ms. Sarah Ficca](#): supports the bill because, they have a Jewish friend whose children are afraid to say they are Jewish in New Haven public schools, and they say antisemitic sentiment is on the rise in the city. They say ADL Connecticut has recorded a 670% increase in antisemitic incidents statewide in the past four years, with 20-30% of those occurring in K-12 schools. They say the bill will ensure that schools are better equipped to prevent and respond to antisemitic incidents.

[Ann Harvey](#): supports the bill because, they serve on the advisory board of the Fairfield Jewish Advocacy coalition, and they wish to combat antisemitism. They also urge the committee to include the American Jewish Committee and Stand with Us in the process of moving this legislation forward.

[Shira Honigstein](#): supports the bill because, they say ADL Connecticut has recorded a 670% increase in antisemitic incidents statewide in the past four years, with 20-30% of those occurring in K-12 schools. They say the bill will ensure that schools are better equipped to prevent and respond to antisemitic incidents.

[Volunteer Education Coordinator Isabelle Hunter](#): supports the bill because, they say Holocaust awareness is dwindling among younger Americans, which they have attributed to what they say has been an increase in antisemitic incidents in our state in the last few years.

[Voices of Hope, Board Member, Jeff Israel](#): supports the bill because, they are the child of Holocaust survivors and lost family members in the Holocaust. They say antisemitism affects society, not just harming the safety of Jews, but those beliefs endanger democratic coexistence in society as a whole.

[Lee Kamlet](#): supports the bill because, they say ADL Connecticut has recorded a 670% increase in antisemitic incidents statewide in the past four years, with 20-30% of those occurring in K-12 schools. They say the bill will ensure that schools are better equipped to prevent and respond to antisemitic incidents. They say targeted programming in schools is needed to educate students early on regarding the dangers of antisemitism.

[Annette Kaye](#): supports the bill because, they are the daughter of Holocaust survivors, and they say ADL Connecticut has recorded a 670% increase in antisemitic incidents statewide in the past four years, with 20-30% of those occurring in K-12 schools. They say the bill will ensure that schools are better equipped to prevent and respond to antisemitic incidents.

[Gregory Konover](#): supports the bill because, they say the ADL has documented a 170% increase in statewide antisemitic incidents over the past year, and they say the bill is appropriate first step to combating what they say is a rise in antisemitism in the state.

[Voices of Hope, Robin Landau](#): supports the bill because, they say in 2023, the ADL recorded a 61% increase in reported antisemitic incidents in the state, and they feel proper Holocaust education is crucial towards combating antisemitism. They say the working group the bill establishes will provide the structure needed to support policy revisions, training and educational resources that would bridge the knowledge gap to maximize the impact of Holocaust education in the state and combat the normalization of antisemitism.

[JFACT, Advisory Committee, Nancy Lefkowitz](#): supports the bill because, they are a Jewish mother of children who have experienced antisemitism in their schools. They feel the bill is a crucial step not only towards reacting to antisemitism but preventing it. They say the bill will teach all students that hate has no place in their communities.

[Lori Meyerson](#): supports the bill because, they are the child of a parent who fled Poland in the 1930's in part due to antisemitism in Poland. They say ADL Connecticut has recorded a

670% increase in antisemitic incidents statewide in the past four years, with 20-30% of those occurring in K-12 schools. They say the bill will ensure that schools are better equipped to prevent and respond to antisemitic incidents.

[MD, Kristin Newton](#): supports the bill because, they say the people of Connecticut need to be assured that their representatives will support measures to ensure safe learning environments for all.

[Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Secretary/Treasurer, Cheshire Board of Education, Member, Tony Perugini](#): asks that the CABE be included in the proposed working group that considers these important school community discussions and decisions that include district policy.

[Stephen Rabb](#): supports the bill because, they are an active member of the Jewish community, are concerned with what they say has been a recent rise in antisemitism globally, nationally, and locally, and feel education is the key to fostering respect, empathy and understanding.

[ADL CT, Member, Robert Rader](#): supports the bill because, they were a former executive director of CABE – the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, and they say they have been stunned by what they say has been an outbreak of antisemitism across the world, the country and in the state in recent years. They say ADL Connecticut has recorded a 670% increase in antisemitic incidents statewide in the past four years, with 20-30% of those occurring in K-12 schools. They say the bill will ensure that schools are better equipped to prevent and respond to antisemitic incidents.

[Steven Rashba](#): supports the bill because, they say ADL Connecticut has recorded a 670% increase in antisemitic incidents statewide in the past four years, with 20-30% of those occurring in K-12 schools. They say the bill will ensure that schools are better equipped to prevent and respond to antisemitic incidents.

[Jewish Federation Hartford, Eveline Shekman](#): supports the bill because, they and their husband are the grandchildren of Holocaust survivors, and they say in their town (Farmington) they have seen an escalation of antisemitic words and actions and have had incidents directed towards their own children. They say the bill will ensure that schools are better equipped to prevent and respond to antisemitic incidents.

[Jewish Community Relations Council of the Greater Hartford Jewish Federation, Chair, Gary Starr](#): supports the bill because there is an unprecedented surge in antisemitism in United States with the ADL reporting an all-time high of 8,873 incidents in the US in 2023 and 184 incidents in Connecticut alone, a 667% increase over the previous five years. They say the legislation does not create a new mandate but could encourage teacher training that could be funded by non-profit foundations and community organizations invested into fighting hate. The following submitted similar testimony:

[Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford, CEO and President, David Waren](#)

[Voices of Hope, Lawrence Zemel MD](#): supports the bill because, their parents were Holocaust survivors, and they say as the country is drifting towards the right and autocracy, they feel it's important to establish guardrails against antisemitism in our public schools.

[Voices of Hope, Marge Swaye](#): supports the bill because, their parents were Holocaust survivors and they have served on the board of Voices of Hope for many years, an organization which promotes a culture of courage to stand up against hatred through Holocaust and genocide education and remembrance. They feel Holocaust education is essential to combating antisemitism. They say ADL Connecticut has recorded a 670% increase in antisemitic incidents statewide in the past four years, with 20-30% of those occurring in K-12 schools. They feel education on antisemitism needs to be expanded to cover the history of it both before the Holocaust and in modern times.

[Anonymous](#): supports the bill because, the person comes from a family of Holocaust victims and Holocaust survivors, and they feel schools are distributing anti-Jewish propaganda materials. They would also support measures added to the bill that more specifically addresses antisemitic activities in schools.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Expressed

Reported by: Alex Sferrazza

Date: 04/07/25