

**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Education and the Workforce**  
**Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions**

Unmasking Union Antisemitism

September 9, 2025

Written Testimony

My name is Shelley Goldfarb. I have worked at New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG) for the last nine years. I work as an immigration attorney for low-income survivors of domestic violence.

My job is very rewarding, primarily because I am able to help abuse survivors leave unhealthy situations to become self-sufficient. It is most rewarding to witness clients access their legal rights in the U.S. whereas previously, they had little to no rights in their home countries. My job can also be very difficult, as many clients experience on-going trauma. Further, professionals at legal service agencies such as NYLAG are paid relatively low wages and have high caseloads and low retention rates. In 2019, our office unionized and our union is called A Better NYLAG (ABN). The ABN is a chapter of United Autoworkers of America (UAW) Local 2325, the Association of Legal Aid Attorneys (ALAA). I voted to unionize, as it was my expectation that a union would help us bargain for higher wages, improved benefits, and a better work environment. Recently, however, instead of primarily helping union members with better wages, caseloads, and benefits, ABN has focused a disproportionate amount of its time on anti-Israel activities. These activities have created a hostile work environment for its Jewish and Zionist members and allies.

Shortly after October 7, 2023, the worst attack against the Jewish people since the Holocaust, ABN increased its anti-Israel campaign. On October 12, 2023, NYLAG's President and CEO sent an all-staff email expressing sympathy and safety concerns for Jewish employees concerning the next day's anti-Israel "global day of rage" protest in New York City. Citing a briefing from the New York Police Department (NYPD), the email also offered staff to work from home on October 13, 2023, for those that wished to avoid the planned protest for that day.

On the evening of October 13, 2023, still not one week after the terrorist attack, ABN responded with an all-staff email of its own. In the union's email, they minimized threats of antisemitism and also blamed the NYPD's supposed motivation to "turn out in force" at the protest on the NYPD being "frequent collaborators with the IDF." To my absolute horror, I

received ABN's email in the middle of streaming a Sabbath memorial service for the victims of October 7, 2023. I did not go in person to this memorial service, because I was too afraid of the security risks for that day, so I decided to stream it online. This was the first Sabbath since the terrorist attacks, so emotions were still very raw. The ABN's decision to send an email minimizing antisemitic threats during the first Sabbath after the terrorist attacks was incredibly insensitive to its Jewish members.

Imagine the feelings of betrayal when I discovered that a union which purported to represent me was doing the exact opposite. When I voiced my concerns to union members about their email minimizing antisemitism, I was met with hostility. I have since learned that this is a common phenomenon; when you call them out, they may deflect and instead reverse the situation by accusing you of trying to silence them, to sabotage them, which ironically, is another antisemitic trope. It is also very ironic that while they claim "free speech," for themselves, they actively silence the opposing views from Jewish or Zionist ABN members or their allies. Zionism is the right of the Jewish people, who have indigenous rights in Israel, to self-determination, just like any other people. If I express this view to the union, I fear retaliation from the entity charged with supporting all its members.

As of today, ABN members, with the ABN's full support, display posters, flyers, buttons, and attire, demonizing Israel and justifying terrorism against Jews. One button states, "Resisting colonialism is not terrorism." Other signs state, "Long live the resistance!" or "Respect existence or expect resistance." In the past, there were posters with images of a Palestinian state whose boundaries cover all of Israel. Another poster used language to "abolish the settler state" and called for "Ceasefire, Intifada Now." These three posters all call for the destruction of the State of Israel. Additionally, I have seen a poster that states, "Liberation now, united against U.S. imperialism, from Colombia to Palestine."

Acting to remedy this antisemitic and toxic work environment, consistent with state and federal laws, NYLAG management announced on May 10, 2024, a policy prohibiting the display of "any posters or other postings regarding the Israel/Gaza conflict" in the office. The ABN had a duty to all of its members to ensure an inclusive and non-discriminatory work environment. However, rather than stand with its Jewish members, the ABN filed a charge with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) on June 20, 2024, and amended it on August 16, 2024. The NLRB charge alleged a violation of the ABN members' right to engage in "concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection." The NLRB charge remains pending.

Meanwhile, the ABN has actively ignored NYLAG's poster policy to protect ABN's Jewish members. On September 17, 2024, the ABN conducted a "lunchtime picket" outside NYLAG's office to protest the poster policy. The ABN had "Wear your Keffiyeh to Work Days" on October

21 and October 29, 2024, and documented these protests on their Instagram account. On November 7, 2024, the ABN delivered a letter to NYLAG management and organized a protest inside NYLAG's office, in which more than 50 staff members marched and chanted. The ABN also compiled a list of Jewish and Zionist staff members. To this day, the ABN continues to put up highly offensive posters to flout the poster policy and harm its Jewish and Zionist members. NYLAG management tries to take them down, but it remains a constant battle, as the posters mysteriously reappear.

The ABN's signs and actions demonstrate propaganda meant to demonize Jews, Zionists, and Israel. I am unable to work in this environment, so I often work in areas of the office without so many signs and hostility. These signs are having the discriminatory effect of pushing Jewish people and Zionists out of these spaces. As a Jewish person, I should not have to work in such close proximity to signs that direct hatred toward me. Additionally, the anti-American signs demonstrate propaganda against the U.S., meant to turn Americans against their own country. Consistent with my understanding of the union's legal purpose, I did voice concerns to ABN to help me with my very high caseload. However, the ABN never responded to my request for work-related help.

With its actions, the ABN is violating its duty of fair representation to those Jewish ABN and non-ABN members employed by NYLAG. The "speech" at issue has nothing to do with improving working conditions for NYLAG employees. It is not protected conduct designed for the employees' "mutual aid or protection."

Antisemitism is a shape-shifting virus that falsely accuses Jewish people of evil and/or the worst offense(s) of the day. Today, it can come in the form of disproportionate or demonizing criticism of Israel or the elimination of Israel. In any case, antisemitic tropes and sentiments are created to elicit an extreme emotional response from people. I have experienced this extreme emotional response directed towards me on at least two separate occasions in the office. Antisemitism is so ancient that it exists on all sides of the political spectrum. It is deeply upsetting that this type of antisemitism feels like a domestic violence situation—similar to that of my clients—where the perpetrators are coming from inside a space that used to feel safe.

Thank you to this esteemed body for reading about my experiences with antisemitism in my union and for taking these issues seriously.