

October 27, 2025

The Honorable Kevin Kiley
Chairman
Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education
Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Responses to Questions for the Record — “*From Playground to Classroom: The Spread of Antisemitism in K–12 Schools*” (Sept. 10, 2025)

Dear Chairman Kiley:

Thank you for the opportunity to supplement the record. Please find my written responses to questions submitted by Rep. Walberg following the September 10, 2025 hearing. We appreciate the Subcommittee’s attention to ensuring equal protection for Jewish students under Title VI.

Respectfully submitted,

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1. Jewish students in schools from New York to California are being physically threatened, verbally harassed, and shamed in class discussions yet we see almost *zero* enforcement of Title VI protections. Are civil rights laws being selectively enforced when the victim is Jewish?

There is strong evidence that Title VI is applied unevenly when Jewish students are the victims of discrimination and harassment. Jewish students from coast to coast have been physically assaulted, threatened, excluded from activities, or bullied by peers and teachers for their Jewish identity or perceived connection to Israel or Zionism—yet in many instances, enforcement has been delayed or absent. In some cases, teachers and administrators either look the other way or even encourage anti-Semitic harassment and discrimination in schools.

In reviewing reported anti-Semitism in K-12 schools, the Brandeis Center has found that complaints often remain pending for months or even years, are closed without findings, or are dismissed on grounds that would not be applied to other protected classes. Anti-Semitic conduct may be characterized as mere 'political speech' rather than discrimination and harassment creating the perception—and practical reality—that Jewish students are not afforded the same level of protection under Title VI. No publicly available data exists on the frequency with which Jewish families report antisemitic discrimination to school districts and receive a hostile, dismissive, or retaliatory response. However, reports highlight many cases of district inaction or inept handling, suggesting this is a systemic problem. The result is a reluctance on behalf of families to report anti-Semitism, driven by fears that reporting will make things worse.

Reports from Jewish families and advocacy groups show multiple examples of negative school district responses. These include:

- Dismissal and inaction: Some families report that their complaints are not taken seriously or are ignored, enabling antisemitic behavior to continue unchecked.
- Minimizing incidents: Some schools dismiss antisemitism as "political debate" rather than identifying it as discrimination. An incident report might be described as a "misunderstanding" by the district, even after a legal settlement is reached.
- Hostile environment: The Brandeis Center has reported cases where administrators or faculty have fostered antisemitic environments by downplaying incidents or promoting biased curricula.
- Lack of accountability: Some reports find that administrators fail to hold students and faculty accountable for antisemitic harassment, assault, and other policy violations.
- Negative consequences for the child: Students fear that speaking up will worsen their situation. For example, one Jewish student was reportedly told by a vice principal that the school could not provide ongoing security, leading the family to leave the district.
- Intimidation: Families in some communities have reported being pressured to withdraw complaints, with some questioning the motivation behind reports that paint a broad negative picture of a district.

1(a). In New York City, multiple schools saw Jewish students threatened or attacked physically in the aftermath of October 7. Are any of those school districts being investigated by the Department of Education?

Following the October 7 Hamas terrorist attacks, Jewish students in New York City public schools were threatened, assaulted, and subjected to chants supporting violence against Jews.

While DOE complaints are not always available to the public, the Brandeis Center is unaware of New York City schools that are under DOE investigation.

2. In Massachusetts, maps were uncovered that depicted Israel allegedly “stealing” all of “Palestinian lands.” In Los Angeles, a 5th grade teacher promised to teach 10 and 11-year-old students to “unlearn Zionist propaganda” that says Hamas is a “terrorist organization.” Is this not evidence that a hostile environment in violation of civil rights laws exists at these schools?

The examples cited—elementary curricula in Massachusetts depicting Israel as having 'stolen' Palestinian land, and a Los Angeles teacher instructing 10- and 11-year-olds to 'unlearn Zionist propaganda'—are clear manifestations of a hostile educational environment in violation of state and federal civil rights laws. These materials and statements communicate to Jewish students that their identity, heritage, and connection to Israel are illegitimate or immoral. Such instruction goes well beyond political debate; it constitutes ideological indoctrination that stigmatizes children based on their shared ancestry and national origin.

The Brandeis Center has documented dozens of similar cases nationwide where teachers, outside contractors, and activist groups have introduced politicized, anti-Israel content into K–12 classrooms. In some instances, school districts have partnered with organizations that openly reject the legitimacy of the Jewish state or use classroom materials that recycle antisemitic tropes. When a school environment permits or endorses such conduct, it meets the legal standard for a 'hostile environment' under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

3. When Jewish families report antisemitic discrimination to school districts, how often do those districts respond with hostility, dismissal, or retaliation?

Jewish families who report anti-Semitic incidents frequently encounter institutional hostility. Instead of addressing antisemitism as a civil rights issue, many districts reframe it as political debate or academic freedom. This reframing allows schools to avoid accountability while sending a dangerous message to victims that their safety is negotiable. In cases handled by the Brandeis Center, parents have been ignored, accused of weaponizing complaints, or even retaliated against by school administrators. Students have been disciplined, ostracized, or excluded from opportunities after their families reported harassment. This pattern of retaliation creates a profound chilling effect that discourages victims from coming forward and undermines the promise of Title VI.

The [Brandeis Center Coalition to Combat Anti-Semitism](#) (the “Coalition”) was created to represent the interests of its members, including by filing actions in its name for the benefit of its members, while protecting its members’ privacy and personal information. The Coalition is entitled to protect the confidentiality of its members’ identities and personal information, as well as internal communications and communications with the Coalition’s counsel, based on the First Amendment rights of free assembly and free speech. When the Coalition files a lawsuit in its name, it does not disclose the names of the members whose interests it is representing. Instead, allegations describing anti-Semitic incidences refer to members by pseudonym, such as Member No. 1 and omit information that might tend to reveal the identities of the member.

4. What reforms, either statutory or regulatory, are needed to ensure Jewish students receive the same federal protections as any other group?

To ensure that Jewish students receive equal protection under federal civil rights laws, Congress and federal agencies should consider the following statutory and regulatory reforms:

- **Adoption and Enforcement of IHRA:** Federal reforms to protect Jewish students include using the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism when enforcing civil rights laws, as directed by proposed legislation and executive orders. Key statutory and regulatory measures include requiring all schools to adopt this definition in their codes of conduct, enforcing existing laws against harassment and violence, and addressing specific issues like online harassment and academic boycotts of Israel.
- **Mandatory Training and Compliance Programs:** Reforms to protect Jewish students may also include mandatory training for all K-12 administrators, teachers, and civil rights coordinators on recognizing and addressing anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic instructional materials.
- **Third Party Accountability:** Outside groups with anti-Semitic agendas are partnering with local school districts to insert biased curricula and instructional materials into the classroom. Some of these groups are connected to foreign funding sources with anti-American and anti-Israel interests. These groups should be closely monitored and held accountable for their role in K-12 anti-Semitism.