

March 13, 2020

Chairman Dolores Gresham	Sen. Mike Bell	Sen. Ferrell Haile
1 st Vice-Chair Brian Kelsey	Sen. Rusty Crowe	Sen. Joey Hensley
2 nd Vice-Chair Raumesh Akbari	Sen. Steven Dickerson	Sen. Jon Lundberg

Dear Chairman Gresham and Committee Members:

On behalf of all four Tennessee Jewish Federations (Chattanooga, Knoxville, Memphis and Nashville), we are writing to urge you to support Senate Bill 1250, the Anti-Semitism Awareness Act, sponsored by Senator Gresham.

As Jews, we have been collectively fighting anti-Semitism for thousands of years. Although it may take on new and varied forms, anti-Semitism rears its ugly head in every generation. In its recently released *Antisemitism Uncovered: A Guide to Old Myths in a New Era*, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) notes: "We must never normalize even seemingly harmless forms of hate-based prejudice; this is what strengthens dangerous social attitudes, which can erode the values of even the most just society."

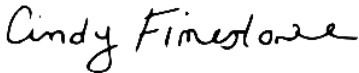
According to the ADL, in TN in 2019, there were several incidents of anti-Semitism at educational institutions including, but not limited to, the defacement of the iconic "rock" at University of Tennessee-Knoxville, two separate incidents of anti-Semitic graffiti/swastikas at Vanderbilt University, and harassment of a Jewish elementary school student in Germantown, and a Jewish middle school student in Ooltewah.

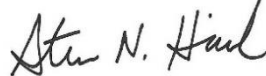
The Anti-Semitism Awareness Act acknowledges that "Anti-Semitism remains a persistent, disturbing problem in elementary and secondary schools and on college campuses." By enacting this bill, the TN Department of Education will be able to apply the federal definition of anti-Semitism and investigate any violations of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

This bill sends a strong message that Tennessee will not tolerate anti-Semitism. Your support of this bill will serve to strengthen our state's resolve in combating anti-Semitism while at the same time ensuring that the individual right of free speech enshrined in the U.S. and Tennessee Constitutions will be protected no matter how distasteful, hurtful or derogatory that speech might be to those of the Jewish faith.

We urge you in the strongest possible terms to vote in support of the Anti-Semitism Awareness Act when it comes before your committee and when it is considered for final passage by the full Senate.


Thank you for your consideration,


Cindy Finestone, Chair, Memphis Jewish Federation


Steven Hirsch, President

Jewish Federation and Jewish Foundation of Nashville and Middle Tennessee


Michael Dzik, Executive Director


Chip Rayman, President Knoxville Jewish Alliance


Laura Linder, JCP President & CEO


Eric Stillman, Executive Director

Jewish Federation of Greater Chattanooga


Michael Spector, Chair