

Chairman Argall, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Dr. Andrew Goretzky, and I am the Senior Regional Director for the Anti-Defamation League's Philadelphia Regional Office, serving PA, NJ and DE. I hold a doctorate in Higher Education Administration from The George Washington University, and I spent 23 years working in education before joining ADL. I did not come to this work abstractly. I came to it because of what I saw, and what I lived, inside our schools.

I want to share with you about a moment in 2005 that has shaped my entire career.

I was sitting in a training session on a college campus, the kind of professional development every administrator sits through. A slide went up equating Zionism with racism and sexism, lumped in on a list of "isms" we were all supposed to reject. I raised my hand. I said I was confused. I asked the presenter to explain what Zionism actually meant. The presenter did not know. The slide had simply been given to them by a previous colleague, dropped into a deck, and repeated as fact to a room full of educators.

So, I explained where my Zionism comes from. It comes from my grandfather, who taught me that as Jews, we should support the existence of the State of Israel because it is the one place on the planet where we can guarantee we will not be persecuted by our own government for being Jewish. He explained it to me the way he understood the world: he talked about Black Americans and slavery, and about Japanese Americans and the internment camps of World War Two. He wanted me to understand what it means for a people to have no guaranteed place of refuge, and what it means when they finally do.

The presenter apologized. But I have never stopped thinking about the people who were not in that room. How many educators walked out of sessions just like that one, carrying the idea that Zionism is a slur, a synonym for racism, without ever once being asked to explain what it actually means? That is the problem we are facing today, two decades later, and it has only gotten worse. We now have a generation and a half of young people who have grown up hearing "Zionist" used as a curse word, without ever being taught what it means, where it comes from, or who it describes. Words get thrown around without understanding, and that is exactly how hate becomes normalized.

That is why I am here today, and that is why the data matters.

Nationally, ADL recorded 6,274 antisemitic incidents in 2025, the third-highest total since we began tracking this data in 1979. And while incidents declined overall, our schools did not get safer. Antisemitic incidents at K-12 schools nationwide remained essentially flat: 825 in 2025, barely down from 860 the year before.

Here in Pennsylvania, the trend is just as troubling. In 2023, we recorded 39 antisemitic incidents in Pennsylvania K-12 schools. In 2024, that number fell 46 percent, to 21, and for a moment it looked like progress. But in 2025, incidents climbed back up 19 percent to 25. The decline was a pause, not a turning point.

And – Please remember that these numbers are grossly underreported. At every speaking engagement I go to, there is always someone who has experienced antisemitism and never reported it to anyone. Antisemitism, like all biased related incidents goes underreported.

Behind every piece of data is a child. Please excuse the language that I am about to use, they are quoted from incidents reported to ADL. In one school district, graffiti was found in a high school bathroom reading, "Jews need to fucking die." In another district, a student received text messages that read, "You deserve death because you're a Jew," "Dirty Jew," and "Jew I will rape you." In yet another town, someone stood outside a Jewish school shouting, "Fuck the Jews," and "Jew is the worst religion." In another district, a student was pushed on a school bus and told, "You have to sit up front. Kikes can't sit in the back." In yet another location, a student had his Star of David ripped from his neck during a football game while his attacker shouted, "I hate Jews," and called him a "kike."

Physical assaults on Jewish students in Pennsylvania K-12 schools occurred every single year from 2023 through 2025. And over that same period, incidents at Jewish K-12 schools in this commonwealth quadrupled, from one in 2023 to four in 2025. In less urban area of the state, a middle school civics teacher assigned a quiz whose "correct" answer stated that the goal of Hamas is to "confront the Zionist project." That is not an isolated bad actor. That is the same failure I witnessed in 2005, playing out again in a Pennsylvania classroom, with a teacher standing at the front of the room.

This is why education has to be at the center of any solution this committee advances. Antisemitism does not only spread through swastikas and slurs. It spreads through curriculum nobody vetted, through professional development nobody fact-checked, and through the casual repetition of words like "Zionist" as an insult by young people who have simply never been taught otherwise.

I am asking this committee to invest in real, substantive education for the educators who shape our children, not just single trainings, but sustained instruction on what antisemitism actually looks like, grounded in a widely accepted definition. I am grateful to Attorney General Dave Sunday for recently publishing an op-ed that discusses the importance of having a definition of antisemitism. I am asking you to require that anti-bias and civics curriculum be reviewed for accuracy before it reaches a classroom. And I am asking you to recognize that when we let hateful language go unchallenged and unexplained, we are not being neutral. We are teaching a generation that hate is normal.

ADL stands ready to be a resource and a partner to this committee, to Pennsylvania's schools, and to every educator who wants to get this right. Thank you.