

RABBI MOSHE HAUER

Executive Vice President

Rabbi Moshe Hauer Testimony

House Education and the Workforce Committee

Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development

“Confronting the Scourge of Antisemitism on Campus”

November 14, 2023

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Subcommittee:

My name is Rabbi Moshe Hauer. You have heard and will hear individual stories of what life has been like for Jewish students on America’s university campuses. I would like to share with you the bigger picture. While I come to you today as the Executive Vice President of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, also known as the Orthodox Union, the largest organization serving Orthodox Jews in the world, in this testimony I hope to represent the entire Jewish community, every Jew and every Jewish student on a university campus. Across the entire Jewish communal and religious spectrum, my colleagues and I work together daily to address the plague of antisemitism that has struck us all, a plague that is afflicting our beloved United States and that is firmly centered in its institutions of higher learning.

I want to share with this committee three points.

1. The Orthodox Union, along with Hillel, Chabad, and others, directs significant resources and attention to our future, to our youth and students. Each of us places full-time educators on university campuses who seek to provide a Jewish home for those students on campus, creating a place where they can come to connect warmly to their faith community, to celebrate the Sabbath and holidays, to socialize, study, eat, and pray together with their religious peers, and to be supported and guided by nurturing mentors.

Today, this entire community is in crisis. Jewish students on campus no longer need a home; they need a fortress. Religious educators who have dedicated their lives to providing students with warmth, nurturing, and a stronger Jewish identity find themselves thrust into the role of trauma counselors and security advocates, even as they experience their own trauma and fear. On too many campuses, everywhere they go the students and their mentors encounter protests, chants, and signs that express the goals of eliminating the world’s one Jewish state and killing Jews and that baselessly accuse Jews of unspeakable crimes. These messages of hate and intimidation come from students and from professors, and they are tolerated if not encouraged by many university administrators.

Decades ago, Jews were not admitted to these universities. Now they let us in and expose us to hostility and intimidation. Which situation is better?

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Every person in this country should have access to the resources that the federal government provides. Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination based on shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics, applies to all programs and activities supported by federal financial assistance, including – of course – both public and private universities. Those universities are tolerating and often supporting faculty and student groups whose vocal and virulent antisemitism create discriminatory environments inhospitable to Jews.

The Jewish experience on campus is a case study in Title VI non-compliance. This hearing you are holding today gives us hope that the fundamental right to religious liberty enshrined in the Bill of Rights will be honored and enforced on these campuses.

2. This intimidation and hostility are experienced by every Jewish student, Orthodox, Reform, or unaffiliated, whether identifiably Jewish or not. The 17,000 non-Orthodox teens that we serve in American public schools through our Jewish Student Union clubs experience it as well, as the plague of brazen and appalling antisemitism has spread from higher education to public middle and high schools. It is, however, important to highlight for a moment the specific experience of Orthodox students on campus.

The Orthodox Union's Jewish Learning Initiative on Campus impacts thousands of Orthodox Jewish students on close to 100 campuses. Orthodox Jews are usually very visibly Jewish, identifiable by religious symbols and recognizable modes of dress, and have not surprisingly been the victims of a significant share of the antisemitic hate crimes. This makes life very difficult in the university environment where the term "Jew" is an epithet, where anger and hate are a constant, and where protection and support from the administration are absent. Our kids cannot circulate anonymously on campus and cannot go undercover by tucking the star of David necklace into the shirt or by removing the *kipphab*. Their strictly kosher diet and their desire to practice their faith mean that if they want to eat or pray – which they do daily – they need to go to the center for Jewish life on campus. The Orthodox Jewish student on campus is a walking billboard: It is me, the Jew, the one you harass, demonize, and intimidate. I can neither run nor hide.

3. Finally, it is critical that you understand how what is happening in our universities is being experienced by the broader Jewish community. The Jewish people are the people of the book, and that book teaches us both our values and our story. We know our history, and it goes like this: For more than three thousand years we have lived in a great many places, where we thrived and contributed to the host country, and then we had to leave. Sometimes

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we were expelled by laws and sometimes by fear, by the sheer danger of the hate that grew towards us. That is our story. We always end up having to leave.

We all believed that the United States was different.

The current tsunami of antisemitism that has surged in the United States and that is centered in its universities has shaken us. And now, as of October 7th, I do not know if there is a Jew that has not said to themselves, “here we go again.”

We never imagined it. Five years ago, one year ago, if someone would tell you or me that we would be sitting in this room discussing this kind of open, blatant, and vile antisemitism in the United States of America, we would have thought they were crazy. America is different. America was supposed to be different. We were sure that this land of liberty and civil rights would be the exception to the rule. Jews would never be chased from here, neither by law nor by fear. That is what we thought.

We are less convinced of that now. We are shaken, we are doubting, and we are wondering, “here we go again.” We are worried for the present, for the safety of our kids on campus. And we are worried for our future in this country and – quite frankly – for the future of a country whose institutions of “higher learning” appear utterly incapable of teaching basic values, right from wrong.

You are our elected leaders.

It is in your hands to restore our faith that America will be the exception to the rule of our history.

It is in your hands to clarify that the true blessing of free speech does not include speakers who “direct a threat to a person or group of persons with the intent of placing the victim in fear of bodily harm or death.”

It is in your hands to ensure that Title VI is respected and enforced, as those same hateful words that may be chanted in our streets may not be part of the government funded environments of our educational institutions that have tragically become discriminatory environments inhospitable to Jews.



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It is in your hands to take a step back and to consider the big and frightening picture of what this country is starting to look like. For us in the Jewish community, America is feeling a lot less free and a lot less safe. We need you to restore our sense of freedom and safety in this blessed land.

Thank you for your attention today and for your actions tomorrow and in the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Moshe Hauer', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Rabbi Moshe Hauer
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Orthodox Union