

I work at the Education Justice Coalition and tonight I'm speaking for myself as a former Vermont public school student, a former educator, and multi-racial, queer Jewish person. First I want to name how concerning these stories of bullying and harassment and encourage the stateboard and any other policy makers in the room to take on bullying and harassment as a serious issue. The Education Justice Coalition is working on a storytelling campaign on bullying and harassment and encourages our partners in the Jewish community to join us.

I want to highlight that many of the concerns Jewish folks tonight are bringing up are already embedded in the updated EQS.

I appreciate and support a strong stance against anti-semitism based bullying and harassment in EQS - "Each school shall maintain a safe, accessible, orderly, civil, flexible, and positive learning environment, which is equitable, anti-racist, culturally responsive, anti-discriminatory, and inclusive; free from hazing, harassment, and bullying;"

I also appreciate the encourage of the studying of the genocides which would include the Houlocast - "This requires a critical examination of the experiences and perspectives of racial and ethnic groups and indigenous peoples that have suffered systemic oppression, marginalization, discrimination, persecution, and genocide within and outside the United States."

In January 2023 a [Factsheet](#) was released from the dept of Education expanding on the civil rights protections for students who are or are perceived to be Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, or of another religious group. If Jewish people are named as a marginalized group and anti-semitism is made named as protected type of discrimination then I think it would be crucial to name other marginalized religions particularly muslim given the rise in anti-muslim hate.

I also want to name that during the Trump era the International Holocaust Rights Association Definition of anti-semitism that highlights anti-zionism instead of just anti-semitism is a dangerous definition to use because it would limit the full teaching of the Palestine / Israeli conflict and the perspective highlighted by the Human Rights Watch report naming Israel as an apartheid state. Thankfully this Trump era definition is not being upheld by the Biden administration.

One thing that makes me proud to be Jewish is to be part of a long lineage of freedom fighters who stand for collective liberation, who fight not only for our own freedom but the freedom of others. Jews were leaders in the civil rights movement risking their own safety for the justice of others. So I think it's crucial if we're advocating for Jewish people to be named in this document then we also need to name Muslims as a marginalized group and any other marginalized religious group be both named and protected.