

As a retired teacher and proud Jewish Vermonter, I'm glad to hear the agency is considering adopting new rules regarding inclusivity. I must say that I am very disappointed, and to be honest, baffled as to why the group drafting the rules has sought to eliminate Jewish people from definition of Ethnic Groups. I urge you to include Jewish people in this definition. Antisemitism is not new, and it is not gone. My granddaughter who graduated from high school in June 2023 was a victim of two instances of harassment and bullying based on her religion. Having someone ask her about gas chambers, as if it's just a casual conversation is not acceptable and should never happen. When you're the only Jewish person in your class, it's even more important that people stand up, not only to protect you, but to educate people, so there will be less likelihood of ignorant, hurtful comments being made. Clearly, there is some knowledge about historical events but there is an obvious lack of understanding and critical thinking about these events. Additionally, education should be not just about tragic events in history, but also about the wonderful contributions made by Jews that have benefited and continue to benefit all humankind. Another point of concern is that services particularly the High Holidays at Jewish places need to have armed guards there. There aren't even words to describe how wrong it is that this is necessary. Lastly, a concern that I had as a teacher here in Vermont stemmed from the lack of diversity, both in terms of students and staff. I worry that our students would be behind others when they left Vermont for college or jobs because of their lack of exposure to other cultures and ethnicities and ideas. Vermont students deserve the best.

Sincerely,
Susan LeDrew
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