



THE GENERAL COURT OF MASSACHUSETTS  
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1053

**Special Commission on Combating Antisemitism  
Representative Simon Cataldo & Senator John C. Velis, Co-Chairs**

**Commission Meeting #14  
November 5, 2025 – 11:00 A.M. to 5:00 PM.**

**Massachusetts State House  
24 Beacon Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02133  
Gardner Auditorium**

**Virtual via Microsoft Teams**

**AGENDA**

1. Roll Call
2. Approve Prior Meeting Minutes: October 16, 2025
3. Statements of the Chair and Announcements – Rep. Cataldo + Sen. Velis
4. Discussion on Law Enforcement Training – Chief James Hicks of the Natick Police Department; Chairman, Municipal Police Training Committee (MPTC)
5. Discussion on the Massachusetts Special Commission on Combating Antisemitism’s Draft Final Report
6. Discussion on Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s (DESE) Antisemitism and Societal Bias Prevention Curriculum and Professional Development Draft Rubric
7. Adjourn

This virtual meeting will be viewable by the public via a livestream that can be found on the <https://malegislature.gov/> website. Please be advised that the schedule and agenda are subject to change at the discretion of the co-chairs.

For general feedback and comments please fill out the Special Commission's feedback form on the Commission’s website, which can be found [here](#):

For questions, or to contact the Commission, please email: [scca@malegislature.gov](mailto:scca@malegislature.gov)

**Posted at 3:00pm on 10/31/2025**

**Massachusetts Special Commission on Combatting Antisemitism**

**Meeting Minutes 10.16.2025**

**Date:** October 16, 2025

**Time:** 12:30pm-4pm

**Location:** Kerem Shalom Synagogue (659 Elm Street, Concord, MA 01742) and Virtual via Microsoft Teams

**Attendees:**

- State Senator John Velis (In-person)
- State Representative Simon Cataldo (In-person)
- Jeremy Burton, CEO of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston (In-person)
- Jody Kipnis, CEO of the Holocaust Legacy Foundation (In-person)
- Peggy Shukur, Vice President of the East Division of the Anti-Defamation League (Virtual)
- Robert Leikind, Regional Director of the American Jewish Committee New England (In-person)
- Michael Memmolo, Executive Director at the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (In-person)
- State Representative Steven Howitt (In-person)
- David Friedman, Governor's Appointee (In-person)
- Erin Hashimoto-Martell, Associate Commissioner - Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (In-Person)
- Jill Hai, Lexington Select Board (In-Person)
- Aaron Polansky, Superintendent of Old Colony Regional Vocational Technical High School (Virtual)
- Rita Blanter, Board Member of Congregation Ahavat Olam in North Andover Jill Hai, Member of the Lexington Select Board (Virtual)
- Constantia Papanikolaou, Chief Legal Counsel, Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (Virtual)
- District Attorney Paul Tucker, Essex County District Attorney (In-Person)
- Mayor Ruthanne Fuller, Mayor of Newton (Virtual)

## 1. Roll Call

- **Commission Co-Chair Cataldo** called the meeting to order and asked Anna O’Sullivan to conduct the roll call.
- **Roll Call:** Conducted by Anna O’Sullivan.

## 2. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes

- **Commission Co-Chair Cataldo** requested a motion to approve the minutes from the September 25, 2025, meeting.
- **Commission Memmolo** motioned to approve.
- **Commissioner Co-Chair Velis** seconded.
- **Vote:** The minutes were adopted by a voice vote.

## 3. Opening Statements and Announcements

- **Commission Co-Chair Cataldo** welcomed commission members and the public. He emphasized personal significance of having meeting at Kerem Shalom Synagogue. Expressed gratitude to Kerem Shalom staff and community, Concord Police Department. Provided overview of meeting agenda.
- **Commission Co-Chair Velis** thanked Kerem Shalom community for hosting. Noted that he may not be able to attend future hearings due to role in National Guard. Emphasized that Commission was created to combat antisemitism.
- **Commission Co-Chair Cataldo** announced October 27 meeting has been cancelled and a new date is being considered.

## 4. Discussion on Combating Antisemitism while Protecting Civil Liberties

**Speaker:** The Honorable David A. Lowy, current General Counsel, University of Massachusetts, former Associate Justice, Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court

### **Discussion Highlights:**

- Shared personal family history with Holocaust and how his parents found community in MA.
- Noted that America should be a place where diversity is celebrated, and that democratic process is under stress from lack of civility and challenges of social media.
- Emphasized the importance of protecting freedom of speech.

- Cited UMass response to Women in German Conference disallowing those affiliated with Israeli institutions.
- Stated hate of all forms must be eradicated.

### **Q&A Highlights:**

- **Commissioner Friedman** asked whether IHRA raises First Amendment Concerns or prevents educators from educating; Justice Lowy noted that IHRA is not legally binding and that the definition is often confused with its examples. Stated that he does not believe IHRA violates First Amendment or negatively impacts academic freedom as IHRA allows for criticism of Israel.
- **Commissioner Friedman** asked about best practices at UMass to combat antisemitism; Justice Lowy responded to highlight increased training on Title VI, bias training, and multifaith initiatives.
- **Commissioner Tucker** asked if there is a vetting process for allowing outside speakers; Justice Lowy stated that UMass gets involved if the speaker is discriminatory. Stated that schools must be content-neutral, and cited National Socialist Party of America v. Village of Skokie. Noted that UMass is a limited public forum, and that shouting people down is not free speech.
- **Commissioner Papanikolaou** asked about best practices for upholding First Amendment rights on campuses; Justice Lowy stated that schools must balance right to safety and education with free speech using time, place and manner restrictions to ensure protest and speech doesn't interfere with students' rights to safety and education. Noted the important history of peaceful protest at UMass.
- **Commission Co-Chair Velis** asked about the role legislative intent plays when judges review statutes; Justice Lowy stated that legislative intent is everything, and that it is anti-democratic when judges infuse normative values into open-ended statutes.

## **6. Discussion: How Law Enforcement Uses Restorative Justice to Address Antisemitism**

**Speaker:** District Attorney Marian Ryan, Middlesex County District Attorney's Office

### **Discussion Highlights:**

- Emphasize that restorative justice is a natural fit for hate/bias crimes, and that when restorative justice is used, victims or more satisfied with prosecution outcome and there is a lower recidivism rate. Noted that restorative justice works well in non-law enforcement contexts (schools), and that education is the most effective tool for combating hate.
- Highlighted current restrictions when it comes to justice system, including that currently only the owner of property can be the victim of a property damage-based hate crimes, and that

- Judges cannot require defendants in cases disposed via a continuance without a finding to attend diversity/bias training.

### **Q&A Highlights:**

- **Commissioner Friedman** asked whether the charging of hate crimes is related to restorative justice options; DA Ryan responded that they are largely separate.
- **Commissioner Hai** asked which school districts have model restorative justice programs; DA Ryan noted Concord, Lowell, and Arlington.
- **Commissioner Shukur** asked about allyship/outreach and how it relates to restorative justice; DA Ryan stated that her office has done a lot of community outreach to make community members feel heard, welcome and safe and noted that an online reporting form increased the flow of communication from community to DA's office.
- **Commissioner Leikind** asked whether restorative justice is the right approach in all cases and whether the degree of harm caused by defendant should be considered; DA Ryan noted that whether restorative justice is effective depends on the quality of the program.
- **Commissioner Burton** quoted portion of White House National Strategy on restorative justice and asks whether it supports work done by DA Ryan's office; DA Ryan responded yes.

### **7. Perspectives of Local Rabbis – Panel of Local Rabbis**

**Speakers:** Rabbi Darby Leigh, *Kerem Shalom Synagogue, Concord*; Rabbi Karen Thomashow, *Temple Isaiah, Lexington*; Rabbi Braham David, *Congregation Beth Elohim, Acton*

### **Discussion Highlights:**

- Rabbi Leigh noted that Jewish community is emotionally exhausted; noted that antisemitism is more easily identifiable when coming from the right but since 10/7 it has also been coming from the left; warned that attacks on MA institutions by federal government is very concerning for Jews; noted that calling something antisemitic can be weaponized in a manner which causes further harms to Jews; stated that the Jewish community thrives when democracy is strong and flourishing; reminded Commission to keep in mind other disadvantaged minority groups when making findings and recommendations.
- Rabbi David noted that a lack of or insufficient response to antisemitism can be just as painful as actual incident; highlighted that changing culture is harder than making policy, and that real change/progress requires culture which doesn't tolerate antisemitism.
- Rabbi Thomashow emphasized need to address antisemitism with compassion and nuance as opposed to simplicity; noted her congregants have been increasingly worried about antisemitism and that Jewish parents are particularly anxious since 10/7.

### **Q&A Highlights:**

- **Commission Co-Chair Cataldo** expressed need for more responses to antisemitism like Acton-Boxborough Regional School District Superintendent Peter Light's.
- **Commission Hashimoto-Martell** noted creation of DESE rubric for instruction on antisemitism and encouraged public comment and feedback on rubric.
- **Commission Rep. Howitt** asked about budgeting for security at synagogues; Rabbi's noted that budgeting and funding for security is an increasing consideration and major focus, emphasized the usefulness of state security grants to increase security measures.
- **Commissioner Shukur** asked about damage antisemitism has done on congregants; Rabbi Thomashow noted that there is a lot of hurt when officials or administrators do not call out antisemitic incidents as antisemitic or call out its origins; Rabbi Leigh noted when asking whether something is antisemitic or whether Jews are overreacting, that we should compare with other symbols of hate against other groups.
- **Commissioner Friedman** asked why there has been an increase in antisemitism post 10/7; Rabbi Leigh noted the antisemitic responses came following Israeli military action and that people are uncomfortable with Jews exercising collective power; Rabbi David noted that people look for simplicity and a scapegoat; Rabbi Thomashow stated it was hard to be nuanced after the war began and that hate in all forms has been platformed nationally.

#### 8. Discussion on Charging, Prosecuting and Sentencing Hate Crimes in Massachusetts

**Speaker:** Christina Miller, Associate Clinical Professor of Law and Associate Director of Clinical Programs, Suffolk University Law School; Former Chief of District Courts and Community Prosecutions, Suffolk County District Attorney's Office

##### **Discussion Highlights:**

- Shared that hate crimes can broadly be categorized in three types: group think, reactive (where a particular event or news story is the impetus of the crime), and those perpetrated by individuals with addition or mental illness.
- Noted that in mixed motive cases, juries often don't see sufficient evidence that the motive of the crime was hate or bias, and that there should be continuing training for law enforcement and clerk magistrates on how to identify hate crimes. Also noted that juries often have difficulty understanding on how one individual can deprive another of their constitutional rights, clarifying statute would result in a clearer jury instructions.
- Noted that Victim Bill of Rights does not require judges to accept community impact statements.

#### 9. Discussion on Community Efforts to Combat Antisemitism

**Speakers:** Jodi Sperber, *Concord-Carlisle Against Antisemitism*; Steven Van Evera, *Lexington United Against Antisemitism*

### **Discussion Highlights:**

- Jodi Sperber noted that tackling antisemitism requires community effort, must be relationship based and civil; noted that Jewish life is not just about survival, but about flourishing.
- Steven Van Evera stated the Jewish community deserves to feel a sense of belonging and needs supports and partners in community; discussed the historic role Christianity has played in promoting antisemitism.

### **Q&A Highlights:**

- **Commission Co-Chair Cataldo** asked about Concord Against Antisemitism definition of antisemitism; Jodi Sperber said that the organization is trying to thread the needle in crafting their definition but is more focused on community building.
- **Commission Hai** noted the importance that Lexington United Against Antisemitism is partially made up of Christian members and holds events at churches.

### **10. The Impact of Antisemitism in Healthcare: The Need for Clinical Neutrality – Panel of Medical Professionals**

**Speakers:** Jacqueline A. Hart, MD, Internist; Consultant, Vaccine & Immunotherapy Center at MGH; Jewish-ERG leader, MGB; Janette Lawrence, MS, LGC; Senior Genetic Counselor, MGH; Elyse Park, PhD, MPH, FAPOS; Professor of Psychiatry and Medicine, MGH and Harvard Medical School; Director, MGH Health Promotion and Resiliency Intervention Research Center in the Mongan Institute, Department of Psychiatry; Leader and co-founder MGB Jewish-ERG; Rodrigo Monterrey, MPA -- Senior Director of Health Equity, Belonging and Engagement, Tufts Medicine; Leila Caplan, BU Medical Student.

### **Discussion Highlights:**

- Dr. Jacquelin Hart noted that healthcare has an antisemitism problem; stated it is unknown how many medical professional and students have left the state or don't want to practice in MA due to antisemitism; urged Commission to address antisemitism as a public health issue and recommended antisemitism bias training to create safe environments for Jewish practitioners.
- Leila Caplan stated that she is fearful of expressing Jewish identity; she has witnessed celebration of October 7 Hamas terrorist attack and Jewish students having been told to hide their identity for fear of retaliation or ostracism, or being afraid to come forward, even anonymously.
- Janette Lawrence stated that she has personally received threats for creating a petition urging employer to address antisemitism concerns; noted that many genetic counselors are hiding Jewish identity; noted that asking about a Jewish patients heritage is medically



relevant, and negative health outcomes can result if patients are hesitant to self-identify as Jewish for fear that they will be subject to antisemitism.

- Elyse Park stated that Jewish clinicians feel unsafe by actions of peers; stated that Jewish Employee Resource Group (ERG) has been an effective tool in supporting Jewish employees.
- Rodrigo Monterrey noted that Jews feel left out of efforts to address and combat discrimination; suggested anti-Jewish bias training and consistent enforcement of anti-discrimination policies; noted that the healthcare workplace has become increasingly political, with professionals and employees displaying political symbols.

#### **Q&A Highlights:**

- **Commissioner Leikind** asked what the response from leadership has been; Panel responds that there has been a good flow of communication especially since the creation of the Jewish ERG.
- **Commission Shukur** shared concern about a situation where Jewish medical students interning in a hospital would be reliant on a recommendation, and feel uncomfortable sharing their full selves for fear that it would harm their career prospects. Asked if there are any protocols or a pass forward for these students or at the hospital?; Leila Caplan stated that this is a problem and gave an example of a lecture which was supposed to be on perinatal care but instead focused on disparaging Israel; shared that Jewish students in that class felt like they could not work with this instructor.
- **Commission Co-Chair Cataldo** asked whether there is a protocol for anonymously reporting such incidents, or other potentially offensive materials; the panel responded that while there is a reporting protocol, no action is taken if the report is anonymous.
- **Commission Co-Chair Velis** asked how an instructor is allowed to teach something unrelated to what they are supposed to teach; Elyse Park stated that this happens all the time and that instructors say they are simply raising awareness of patient's issues.
- **Commission Co-Chair Velis** asked why when victims of antisemitism come forward, they are often told there is a duty to combat all forms of hate; Rodrigo Monterrey responded that antisemitism is driving force.

#### **11. Concord-Carlisle Student Experiences and the Value of Jewish Student Organization**

**Speakers:** Student Members of Concord-Carlisle HS Jewish Student Union

#### **Discussion Highlights:**

- Shared that despite a heavy focus on DEI, students still felt they had to hide Jewish identity and often experience cyber-bullying based on antisemitic hate.
- Stated that school did not exhibit transparency in their reaction to reports of antisemitism, although response did include a series of assemblies on good intent and anti-bias.

- Asked that active bystander training be implemented for entire student body, and shared that many students feel relieved to have a community space to go to.
- Noted that find themselves unfairly in the center of Israel-Gaza firestorm.

### **Q&A Highlights:**

- **Commission Co-Chair Velis** noted that mental health issues are a problem, and that having conversations is key; Panel agreed and noted the importance of non-Jewish allies engaging in conversation.
- **Commission Co-Chair Cataldo** asked whether the Jewish Student Union is interfacing with other affinity groups; Panel reiterated that any and all are welcome at the Jewish Student Union meetings and that there have been preliminary discussions to create dialogue between other affinity groups.
- **Commissioner Hashimoto-Martel** asked whether the Jewish Student Union has been in contact or has connection with other schools' affinity groups; Panel noted that that type of coordination and cooperation is on the horizon.

## **12. Discussion on Holocaust Museum Boston: Teaching the Lessons of the Holocaust to Confront Antisemitism Today**

**Speakers:** Dr. Nicole Freeman, Executive Director, Holocaust Museum Boston

### **Discussion Highlights:**

- Noted that Holocaust survivors are passing away, and their stories/voices are becoming fewer. At the same time, learning history of antisemitism can help people recognize warning signs of hate today
- Stressed that students who visit museum gain empathy, critical thinking, willingness to stand up against antisemitism
- Noted that young people are learning on social media, not in classrooms, and that Museum must bring this message to where the young people are.
- Noted that teaching mechanisms of historical Nazi propaganda can make modern propaganda more recognizable, as well as providing resources for educators to help them have difficult conversations.
- Stress that history must be taught through a lens of ethics, civic responsibility, and dangers of unchecked prejudice.

### **Q&A Highlights:**

- **Commission Co-Chair Cataldo** noted that there are criticisms about over-reliance on holocaust history to teach antisemitism history, and stated this museum may be the “antidote” to that problem.
- **Commissioner Friedman** asked if the museum plans to discuss Holocaust ‘inversion’ (where Jewish people are called ‘Nazis’)?; Dr. Freeman stated that Holocaust inversion is very important to teach about and will be discussed at the museum. Noted that the importance of the state of Israel to Holocaust survivors will also be integral to the exhibits.

### **13. Adjournment**

- **Commission Co-Chair Cataldo** thanked commission members and the public for participation and asked for a motion to adjourn.
- **Commissioner Leikind** motioned.
- **Commissioner Tucker** seconded the motion.
- Meeting Adjourned.