



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 #16
November 20, 2025 – 11:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M.**

**Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02133
Hearing Room B2**

Virtual via Microsoft Teams

AGENDA

1. Roll Call
2. Approve Prior Meeting Minutes: November 14, 2025
3. Statements of the Chair and Announcements – Rep. Cataldo
4. Statements from Massachusetts State Treasurer and Receiver General Deborah Goldberg
5. Discussion and Vote on Final Commission Report
6. 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

Posted on 11/18/2025 at 10:00am

Massachusetts Special Commission on Combatting Antisemitism
Meeting Minutes 11.14.2025

Date: November 14, 2025

Time: 10am-2pm

Location: Hearing Room A1 (Massachusetts State House, 24 Beacon Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02133) and Virtual via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

- State Representative Simon Cataldo (In-person)
- State Representative Steven Howitt (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 (In-person)
- Robert Leikind, Regional Director of American Jewish Committee New England (In-person)
- Rita Blanter, Board Member of Congregation Ahavat Olam in North Andover (virtual)
- David Friedman, Governor's Appointee (In-person)
- Dara Kaufman, Executive Director at the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires (in-person)
- Jill Hai, Lexington Select Board (In-Person)
- Mayor Ruthanne Fuller, Mayor of Newton (virtual)
- Jamie Hoag, Senior Counselor to the Attorney General (virtual)
- Michael Memmolo, Executive Director at the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (In-person)
- Erin Hashimoto-Martell, Associate Commissioner - Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (In-person)
- District Attorney Paul Tucker, Essex County District Attorney (Virtual)
- Chief Thomas Fowler, Salisbury Police Department (In-person)

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 November 5, 2025, meeting.
- **Commission Howitt** motioned to approve.
- **Commissioner Kaufman** seconded.
- **Non-opposed:** The minutes were adopted by a voice vote.

3. Opening Statements and Announcements

- **Commission Co-Chair Cataldo** welcomed commission members and the public. He explained process of meeting and that findings and recommendations from the meeting would continue to be incorporated into the Commission's final report draft. Chair Cataldo outlined the process for Commission members ahead of the final Commission meeting on November 20th, 2025.

4. Discussion: Parents for Peace - Why antisemitism is not just a Jewish problem

Speakers: Myrieme Churchill, Executive Director (Parents for Peace); Arno Michaelis, Exit Peer Specialist (Parents for Peace); Mubin Shaikh, Exit Peer Specialist (Parents for Peace)

Key Points:

- Antisemitism is a gateway to broader extremism and radicalization.
- Radicalization often begins in adolescence and is fueled by trauma, isolation, and online grooming. Parents for Peace has worked with youth as young as 12 in Massachusetts.
- Schools, healthcare, and law enforcement need training to identify early warning signs. Ashland High School pilot program in Massachusetts has shown success in prevention.

Recommendations:

- Fund statewide training for K–12 educators, healthcare workers, and police.
- Create diversion programs for hate-based juvenile offenses.
- Treat extremism as a public health crisis.

Commissioner Q&A Highlights:

- Commissioner Howitt inquired about speaker's experience with White Nationalism movement.

- Commissioner Kaufman and Commissioner Leikind emphasized the need for structured diversion programs and teacher training.
- Commissioner Fowler expressed interest in law enforcement training partnerships.
- Commissioner Shukur raised concerns about radicalization at home and online, and speakers highlighted support group for parents and other resources outside of school hours.
- Chair Cataldo highlighted the work and national partnerships of Parents for Peace and thanked them for their participation.

5. Discussion: Lessons from an antisemitism educator supporting the community

Speaker: Oren Jacobson, Chief Executive Officer (Project Shema)

Key Points:

- Antisemitism is misunderstood and often mischaracterized as solely religious.
- Jewish identity is ethnic, ancestral, and cultural—not just religious.
- Antisemitism is cyclical and worsens when Jews are excluded from civic life.
- Binary thinking (e.g., “good Jew vs. bad Jew”) is dangerous and dehumanizing.

Recommendations:

- Train educators and administrators to foster pluralistic, empathetic discourse.
- Avoid politicizing antisemitism; address it structurally, not just ideologically.
- Institutions must resist pressure from extreme voices and support nuanced dialogue.

Commissioner Q&A Highlights:

- Commissioner Friedman asked about dealing with activists who reject nuance.
- Commissioner Kaufman asked for clarification about work on campus. Speaker emphasized teacher training as key solution.
- Commissioner Leikind explored the tension between justice-driven teaching and pluralism. Speaker highlighted difference between civic engagement/participation and educators using class time to share personal perspective.
- Chair Cataldo noted Project Shema’s collaboration with Simmons University in Massachusetts and welcomed more examples of collaboration.

6. Discussion on research and interventions to support Jews in the workplace

Speaker: Karyn Cohen, Volunteer (Combined Jewish Philanthropies) and Member (Center for Combating Antisemitism Advisory Committee); Rebecca Leeman, Chief of Staff, (National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership)

Key Points:

- 1 in 3 Jewish employees feel unsafe being openly Jewish at work, and Jewish ERG leaders often face burnout and lack institutional support.
- Major increase in Jewish Employee Resource Groups (ERG) since October 7, 2023, and Combined Jewish Philanthropies has doubled its ERG network and provides stipends, training, and programming.

Recommendations:

- Mandate antisemitism training in state agencies and encourage it in private sector.
- Support Jewish ERGs as ethnic/cultural—not just religious—affinity groups.
- Convene major employers to share best practices and build allyship.

Commissioner Q&A Highlights:

- Commissioner Friedman raised concerns about antisemitism in nonprofits and arts sectors. Speakers noted similar trends and ongoing research in those sectors.
- Chair Cataldo thanked speakers and asked for additional data points to incorporate into final report.

7. Discussion: Perspectives on antisemitism from Massachusetts clergy of T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights

Speakers: Rabbi Jessica Lowenthal; Rabbi Aliza Schwartz

Key Points:

- Warned against weaponizing Jewish fear to undermine democracy.
- Criticized federal efforts that use antisemitism to attack progressive institutions.
- Emphasized interfaith solidarity and cross-community allyship as essential to Jewish safety.

Recommendations:

- Establish a Massachusetts Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships.
- Expand interfaith programming and dialogue.
- Avoid codifying a single definition of antisemitism; use multiple frameworks.

Commissioner Q&A Highlights:

- Commissioners expressed support for interfaith engagement and asked for examples of similar offices in other states.

8. Discussion on the Immigrant Jewish Experience — Israelis, Russian Jews, and Persian Jews in Massachusetts

Speakers: Robert Mayer, National Co-Chair (Israeli-American Civic Action Network); Eugene Levin (Filmmaker and Community Advocate); Eliana Nahoumi, Representative of the Persian Jewish Community

Key Points:

- Israeli Americans face unique antisemitism tied to Zionism and national origin.
- Persian Jews face erasure and ignorance about their identity.
- Soviet Jews recognize propaganda patterns from the USSR in today's anti-Zionist rhetoric.
- All speakers shared personal and family experiences of antisemitism and violence.

Recommendations:

- Include Israeli, Mizrahi, and Persian Jews in all state antisemitism initiatives.
- Strengthen Holocaust education and enforce Genocide Education Law.

Commissioner Q&A Highlights:

- Commissioner Shukur emphasized the need to reflect Jewish diversity in the report.
- Commissioner Friedman noted that national origin discrimination is already illegal under MA law.
- Commissioner Blanter noted the value of hearing these perspectives.
- Commissioner Burton cautioned against comparing levels of antisemitism across Jewish subgroups.
- Chair Cataldo thanked speakers for sharing their experiences and valuable perspectives.

9. Discussion: A global approach to confront antisemitism and educate on lessons from the Holocaust

Speaker: Alice Nderitu, Former United Nations Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide

Key Points:

- Antisemitism is a global, evolving threat that must be addressed through education, interfaith work, and digital literacy.
- Highlighted the importance of the IHRA definition and Holocaust education.
- Emphasized the role of sports, media, and non-Jewish allies in combating hate.

Recommendations:

- Create a global media literacy hub and digital responder network.
- Support interfaith partnerships and Holocaust remembrance across the Commonwealth.
- Engage with the Commonwealth Jewish Council and international allies.

Commissioner Q&A Highlights:

- Commissioner Friedman asked about the politicization of terms like “genocide.”

- Commissioner Leikind asked about best practices for building allyship.

10. Discussion: What it takes to combat antisemitism in K-12, a parent's perspective

Speaker: Andrea Silbert, Parent

Key Points:

- Shared personal stories of her children facing antisemitic bullying in Massachusetts schools.
- Described systemic failures in school responses, including a case that followed a federal OCR settlement.
- Highlighted the normalization of antisemitism in K–12 and higher education.

Recommendations:

- Clarify and reclaim the meaning of Zionism in the report.
- Add data on Jewish support for Israel's right to exist.
- Strengthen enforcement of civil rights protections in schools.

Commissioner Q&A Highlights:

- Commissioners praised speaker for her courage in sharing experiences and emphasized the importance of her testimony.
- Commissioner Shukur and Chair Cataldo emphasized the need for better information sharing among schools and how law enforcement responds to incidents.
- Commissioner Hashimoto-Martell emphasized the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's commitment to combating antisemitism.
- Commissioner Leikind stressed the isolation that Jews feel, as evidenced in speaker's testimony.

11. Adjournment

- **Chair Cataldo** thanked commission members and the public for participation and outlined the next steps for the Commission and the ongoing work on the final report. **Chair Cataldo** then asked for a motion to adjourn.
- **Commissioner Howitt** motioned.
- **Commissioner Hai seconded the motion.**
- Meeting Adjourned.