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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Mass. Special Commission on Combating Antisemitism Votes to Adopt Preliminary K-12 Findings & Recommendations**

*Preliminary report receives overwhelming praise from statewide leaders.*

**(BOSTON – 8/11/2025)**– Ahead of the 2025-2026 school year, the **Massachusetts Special Commission on Combating Antisemitism** voted on Thursday, August 7, 2025 to adopt its **Preliminary K-12 Education Findings and Recommendations** to guide state agencies and local school districts in the prevention of and response to incidents of antisemitism. During the meeting, Special Commission co-chairs Senator John C. Velis (D-Westfield) and Representative Simon J. Cataldo (D-Concord) expressed their profound gratitude to the many community members who courageously shared their experiences with antisemitism in local schools—contributions that played a vital role in shaping the Commission’s report. They also acknowledged the **widespread support the preliminary report received from officials across the state.**

The preliminary recommendations come at a time where the **Commonwealth continues to see an alarming number of antisemitic hates crimes, rising by 20% in 2024 alone.** The Special Commission, established by Session Law (Acts 2024) Ch. 140, issued this preliminary report which will be included in the final report that is due for submission to the House and Senate Clerks by November 30, 2025. The Co-chairs decided to issue a preliminary report on K-12 education prior to the school year to meet the urgency of the issue. The decision was based on stakeholder input, encouragement from the Legislature and Governor Healey, and the deeply concerning rise in antisemitic incidents that has been occurring in K-12 settings across the Commonwealth in recent years. This report is the result of 10 public meetings involving over 35 hours of testimony and discussion by the 19-member Special Commission. The full list of Special Commissioners and their roll call votes on this report (18/18 present voted yea, 1 absent) is included in the report’s introductory section.

“Back in 2024, I met with a Jewish mother from my district who had shared how truly terrified her young daughter was to share that she was Jewish with her friends, especially when she was at school. This conversation truthfully became the genesis of why I sought to create the Special Commission and why I am so proud to have this Preliminary Report released ahead of the new school year, so Jewish students like this young girl may no longer have to fear bullying and persecution for who they are,” shared Special Commission Co-chair **Senator John C. Velis**. “It is my sincere hope that as our schools begin preparing for the new school year that they will look to the Commission’s report for helpful guidance to prevent and respond to hate. I am incredibly grateful for the immense support of Senate President Spilka, Governor Healey, and the Jewish community from across the Commonwealth on the Commission’s work and for the strong partnership of Co-Chair Cataldo and all of the Commission’s dedicated members.”

“After 10 public meetings and countless hours of engagement with students, educators, families, and community leaders, the Special Commission has delivered a set of preliminary recommendations that represent a major step forward in the fight against antisemitism in K-12 education,” said **Special Commission Co-chair Representative Simon Cataldo**. “We asked the hard questions, confronted uncomfortable truths, and worked to understand how antisemitism shows up in our schools — and how best to stop it. These recommendations offer a clear, actionable playbook for state and local school leaders to create safer, more inclusive learning environments. I want to extend my gratitude to the House Speaker for entrusting me with a Chair position on this Special Commission, and to all of the appointing authorities for their excellent appointments.”

The preliminary report outlines the Special Commission’s findings that antisemitism in Massachusetts K–12 public schools is a pervasive and growing issue. Numerous incidents of hate, bullying, harassment, and discrimination have been reported by both families and educators. Many Jewish students feel afraid to openly express their identity or disclose their faith due to fear of mistreatment or bullying. Meanwhile, students, teachers, and administrators often lack clarity on how to appropriately respond to such incidents, and the state currently has limited insight into how these situations are being addressed.

The report seeks to clarify the current situation and propose both proactive and reactive measures to address and eliminate antisemitic hate in the Commonwealth’s schools. It outlines recommended actions that state agencies and local school districts can take to prevent and respond to antisemitism, including:

- Teaching about antisemitic tropes and myths which are prevalent online when instructing on digital literacy
- Implementing programming and lessons for Jewish American Heritage Month to promote Jewish contributions to America
- Instituting mandatory anti-bias training which specifically addresses antisemitism
- Providing guidance to officials on how to address and communicate effectively when antisemitic incidents occur
- Expanding access to Kosher and Halal foods in schools
- Promoting after school programs to encourage cross-communal bonding
- Encouraging the state to review existing curriculum and make changes to provide age-appropriate, balanced classroom resources to teach about Ancient Israel, Palestine, modern Israel, and Middle East conflicts in alignment with state history and social science standards
- Creating a statewide bias reporting system that includes antisemitism as a form of bias

“Antisemitism has no place in Massachusetts. The Senate fought to get this commission signed into law because in a moment of rising hate and division, the only path forward is to recognize these challenges, call them out, and confront them head-on,” said **Senate President Karen E. Spilka (D-Ashland)**. “I was very young when I first experienced hate simply because I was Jewish. No young person should ever have to feel fear or shame because of who they are. The recommendations in this report seek to ensure that the next generation will celebrate our

differences, learn from one another, and reject hate and discrimination in all forms. I am deeply grateful for the thoughtful and dedicated leadership of Senator Velis, and the work of Representative Cataldo, every member of the Commission, and each individual who bravely testified and shared their stories. I look forward to working together to implement these recommendations in our laws and policies.”

“The preliminary K–12 recommendations issued by the Special Commission on Combating Antisemitism mark a critical step forward in response to the alarming rise in antisemitism in our schools,” said **House Speaker Ronald J. Mariano (D-Quincy)**. “The Commission’s commitment to this work—and the strong support it has received from state leaders—reflects exactly the kind of leadership this moment demands. I’m especially grateful to Representative Cataldo, Senator Velis and the members of the Commission for working tirelessly to ensure that every student in Massachusetts feels safe, supported, and seen.”

Ahead of Thursday’s vote Commissioner Pedro Martinez of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education went before the Commission to provide an update on the Department’s work and to publicly share the Department’s strong endorsement of the preliminary recommendations ([06:34-06:54](#)). The Commission’s work has received statements of support from officials throughout the Commonwealth including Governor Healey, Attorney General Campbell, Treasurer Goldberg, and members of Congress.

### **Statements of Support:**

#### **Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey and Lt. Governor Kimberly Driscoll**

“Antisemitism in any form is unacceptable. We want to thank the members of the Special Commission on Combatting Antisemitism for their thoughtful deliberations and recommendations on the issue. As a state, Massachusetts is committed to doing everything we can to address antisemitism. That starts in our schools. If we want to combat antisemitism and protect the members of our Jewish community, it starts with educating our children, building a better understanding of the Jewish experience, and making it clear that antisemitism has no place in Massachusetts. We will work with DESE to review and begin to implement the recommendations to make sure everyone feels welcome and safe in our schools. We look forward to the continued work of the Commission.”

#### **Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Campbell**

“I am extremely grateful to the Special Commission on Combatting Antisemitism for preparing these critical recommendations to combat antisemitism in our schools. Every child deserves to learn in an environment where they feel safe and accepted for who they are. In Massachusetts, we have a zero-tolerance policy for hate, and my office remains committed to confronting antisemitism and bigotry in all forms.”

#### **Massachusetts State Treasurer Deborah B. Goldberg**

“Addressing antisemitism in our schools is urgent and non-negotiable. I strongly support the Antisemitism Commission’s effort to adopt its K-12 recommendations, which provide clear,

balanced steps to eliminate hate and foster understanding while respecting free speech. Every student deserves to learn in a safe, inclusive environment where they feel valued, respected, and free from fear or discrimination.”

**Congresswoman Lori Trahan, Massachusetts 3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District**

“I applaud the Massachusetts Special Commission on Combating Antisemitism for their critical work to develop tangible, actionable recommendations to increase awareness of and confront antisemitism in schools across the Commonwealth.”

“As antisemitic and religious-based hate crimes rise here in Massachusetts and across the country, we are reminded that each of us has an obligation to protect one another - and especially our children - from hate, ignorance, and violence.

Education is one of our most powerful tools to fight bigotry. I'm grateful to the Commission for ensuring our classrooms remain places of safety, inclusion, and truth.”

**Congressman Jake Auchincloss, Massachusetts 4<sup>th</sup> Congressional District**

“There has been a surge of antisemitism in Massachusetts. In our public schools, Jewish and Israeli students are subject to harassment and ostracization that undermine their sense of self and their inclusion in American society. I commend Senator John Velis, Representative Simon Cataldo, and the members of the Special State Commission on Combating Antisemitism for their leadership in devising a response to antisemitism in our state, which is home to a vibrant Jewish community and Israeli diaspora.”

“The mainstreaming of antisemitism will not be addressed with performative gestures or one-off bias training, lacking proven efficacy. Our schools must both educate *against* antisemitism, including with a model curriculum focused on Holocaust education, and educate *for* critical thinking. In an era marked by post-truth politics and conspiracies platformed by social media, we must be intentional about educating future citizens who reject hate and embrace the American tradition of pluralism, freedom, and individual dignity.”

“I encourage Massachusetts lawmakers and administrators to center this Commission’s recommendations in their follow-on work.”

**Congresswoman Katherine M. Clark, Massachusetts 5<sup>th</sup> Congressional District**

“Antisemitism is on the rise — across the country and here in the Commonwealth. We have a responsibility to root out this hatred and protect our communities. I’m grateful to the Massachusetts Antisemitism Commission for taking urgent action. Their findings will strengthen our efforts to combat antisemitism in schools and help us build a safer future for our children.”

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