



May 29, 2020

Betsy Devos  
Secretary of Education  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202

The Honorable Secretary Devos,

We are writing to express the critical need for the Department of Education (DoED) to take immediate action to protect American Jewish students who are targeted and discriminated against because of their religious beliefs and identity.

Antisemitism is growing in U.S. public schools, including middle schools and high schools. Manifestations of antisemitism span not only classic tropes of Jew-hatred, but also include expressions of hate and delegitimization of the Jewish State. For American Jewish teens, Israel and Zionism are inextricably linked to their Jewish identity.

A recent survey conducted by Club Z, a national Zionist youth movement, indicates that schools are failing to provide Jewish teenagers with a safe learning environment. Jewish students are openly ridiculed and harassed by their classmates and in some cases even their teachers. From Jewish students' lockers defaced with swastikas, to Jewish teens told that they "don't need names, numbers would be enough," to being called a "fascist pig" for wearing a Jewish star, the examples are countless.

President Donald Trump's "Executive Order on Combating Anti-Semitism" has been vital in protecting Jewish students under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by granting them the same protections from discrimination afforded to other minority groups. The Executive Order states that all executive departments and agencies charged with enforcing Title VI, including the DoED, should consider the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)'s working definition of antisemitism. Yet, antisemitism continues to be rampant in public high schools.

We are therefore calling on the DoED to adopt the attached Jewish Students' Bill of Rights to safeguard the rights of Jewish students, in accordance with the Executive Order on Combating Anti-Semitism and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

According to the Jewish Students' Bill of Rights, "We, the Jewish students of America, in order to guarantee an education without fear of harassment, intimidation, or violence on the basis of our identity, affirm that Zionism is an integral part of our Jewish identity, and declare that we are entitled to the following rights at all levels of the United States education system." The universal rights outlined in the document are the most basic things that every student deserves: (1) The Right to Free Expression (2)

The Right to a Fair Education (3) The Right to a Safe Learning Environment (4) The Right to a Comprehensive Definition of Antisemitism, and (5) The Right to Fair Protections.

Secretary, thank you and the DoED for all you have done to safeguard the rights of Jewish students. We believe a Jewish Students' Bill of Rights will afford further necessary protections for Jewish students in American public middle schools and high schools. We appreciate your consideration of this document and look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Masha Merkulova". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Masha" being more prominent than the last name "Merkulova".

Masha Merkulova  
Founder & Executive Director, Club Z

cc: Dr. Mitchell M. Zais  
U.S. Department of Education, Deputy Secretary of Education

Kenneth L. Marcus  
U.S. Department of Education, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights

Frank Brogan  
U.S. Department of Education, Assistant Secretary, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education