

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL GERBER
NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT**

**BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE TO COMBAT HATE**

**COUNCIL CHAMBERS
FEBRUARY 25, 2026**

Good morning Speaker Menin, Chair Salaam, and members of the Council's Committee to Combat Hate. My name is Michael Gerber and I am the Deputy Commissioner of Legal Matters for the NYPD. On behalf of Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch, I thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

At the outset, I want to acknowledge the significance of the issues at hand. We are talking about the security of New Yorkers entering sacred spaces, and the protection of students walking into school. We are discussing protest activity and freedom of speech on the streets of our city. We are addressing hate crimes and the data that informs public discourse around those crimes. The stakes are incredibly high, and they go to the core obligations of the NYPD. Ensuring public safety, upholding constitutional principles, and solving crimes are all at the heart of our mission. With that, I want to address several of the bills before the Committee:

Intro. 1 would require the NYPD to issue a plan for the use of buffer zones at the entrances and exits of places of worship. The NYPD had significant concerns with the initial language of the bill, which we raised in discussions with the Council. Revised language in Intro. 1-A is a product of those discussions, and we greatly appreciate that dialogue and collaboration. The result is a bill that is consistent with the NYPD's ability to protect people entering and leaving places of worship as well as our commitment to facilitating First Amendment activity. We have no objections to Intro. 1-A.

When there is a protest outside a place of worship, the NYPD has two crucial responsibilities. First, we must protect individuals attending that place of worship—exercising their First Amendment rights to the free exercise of religion and freedom of association—so that they can gather safely, without danger, without obstruction, and without interference. That is true when they are approaching and entering the location, when they are inside, and when they are leaving. Individuals who impede access to a place of worship, or interfere with religious services, or otherwise commit crimes against individuals coming and going from a place of worship are subject to arrest.

Second, the NYPD must protect the First Amendment rights of protesters. This does not mean that protesters can go wherever they want, whenever they want. Under the law, there can be reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions on a protest, though the restrictions cannot depend on the protesters' message, and the restrictions cannot limit substantially more speech than necessary. Critically, any such restrictions must allow for ample alternative channels of communication for the protesters to convey their message to their intended audience. This means that protesters have a right to "sight and sound"—that is, to be seen and heard by those that they are protesting against.

These two core principles are not in tension. If individuals choose to protest against those entering a place of worship, the NYPD will ensure that they have sight and sound to the entrance of that location, consistent with the First Amendment. At the same time, the protesters will not be permitted to obstruct, impede, or interfere. I want to acknowledge that in this framework, people attending a place of worship may hear vicious speech, directed at the very core of their identity. They may see signs or banners that are brimming with hate. It goes without saying that this can be gut-wrenching, infuriating, and deeply disturbing, particularly when this is happening outside a community's spiritual home. Nothing that I say should be taken to in any way minimize that pain. But the First Amendment protects the rights of protesters even when their speech is hateful, and the NYPD is obligated to ensure the rights of protesters without regard to the content of protected speech.

When there is a protest outside a place of worship, the NYPD implements these two principles in a number of ways. We create frozen zones, also known as buffer zones, as necessary outside entrances and exits to a place of worship where no one can enter except those going into or out of the location. The frozen zone needs to incorporate clear pathways in and out, so that those approaching or leaving the building are not obstructed. At the same time, we set up a space for protesters within sight and sound of the location.

In these situations, the determinations that need to be made by the NYPD are extremely context specific. NYPD executives draw on their experience and expertise and use their discretion, consistent with the law, to determine the size and contours of a frozen zone, the space designated for sight and sound, and more broadly how we can effectively secure space around a place of worship without abridging the exercise of protesters' constitutional rights. These determinations depend on numerous factors, including the physical configuration of the place of worship; the physical layout of the surrounding space; other sensitive locations in close proximity to the place of worship; the anticipated volume of individuals coming in and out of the location; the time of day; the size of the protest; whether protesters are stationary or marching; whether there are counter-protesters; what other events may be occurring nearby, and how that may affect pedestrian or vehicular traffic; and whether there are any specific and credible threats against that place of worship. The list of relevant considerations goes on and on. These operational decisions cannot be reduced to strict, bright-line rules. To do this right, the NYPD needs to be able to make decisions based on the facts on the ground. This practical reality aligns with the law: the legal touchstone here is reasonableness, and what is reasonable turns on the particular circumstances at hand.

Intro. 1-A will require the NYPD to issue a formal policy memorializing the considerations that go into our operational planning. We stand ready to formulate such a policy. To be clear, the policy will not alter our practices but rather will articulate and describe what we are already doing. The NYPD is proud of the way that our officers respond to protests in this city at a variety of sensitive locations, including places of worship. Are we perfect? No, we are not. But day in and day out, the men and women of the NYPD are doing this challenging work with professionalism and care, in fidelity to the law and our obligation to keep people safe. We will continue to do exactly that.

Intro. 175 is effectively identical to Intro. 1, except that it applies to schools, rather than places of worship. The ability to enter and exit schools safely, without harm or interference, is non-negotiable.

We also must allow protesters to exercise their First Amendment rights outside of schools. The NYPD exercises its discretion, consistent with the law, to accomplish both of these objectives. We raised concerns with the Council regarding the language of Intro. 175, and there is new language in Intro. 175-A that addresses most of those concerns. Again, we appreciate the Council's partnership in crafting this legislation. One outstanding issue is the scope of Intro. 175-A. As drafted, the bill would apply to police activity on both public property and private property, which raises concerns. These are distinct issues, both legally and operationally, and we look forward to addressing that distinction in discussions with the Council.

Intro. 165 would require the NYPD to report quarterly and annually regarding the prosecutorial outcomes, bail determinations, and ultimate court dispositions in every case in which someone has been arrested or indicted for a hate crime. The NYPD supports transparency regarding the disposition of cases following hate crime arrests, but this is not data that the NYPD maintains. While we document individual case outcomes, the aggregate data that this bill seeks is maintained by prosecutors' offices and by the Office of Court Administration. The Council should not direct the NYPD to report data that it does not have. We would also note that the NYPD already discloses a wide array of information regarding hate crimes cases. The NYPD reports aggregate data regarding hate-crime complaints and hate-crime arrests; the race, sex, and age of individuals arrested for hate crimes; and the types of animus that motivated those hate crimes. This data is reported quarterly and annually, both in total and disaggregated by precinct. All this information is available to the public on NYC Open Data and the NYPD's website.

Intro. 297 would require an agency or office designated by the mayor, in consultation with the NYPD and OEM, to provide religious institutions with support in establishing and maintaining security plans. The NYPD already makes this support available and will continue to do so. We would welcome the opportunity to speak with the Council about the resources that the NYPD provides and how they can be enhanced. At the same time, we strongly object to requiring another city agency, whether OEM or otherwise, to provide guidance on these issues. The NYPD has the appropriate expertise and experience in these matters; other city agencies do not. Having a city agency offer guidance on security plans that may conflict with the guidance from the NYPD is a recipe for confusion. It will not enhance security, and risks undermining security. The NYPD is opposed to the bill as drafted.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today, and I look forward to answering any questions that you may have.

**Testimony of CCHR
Before the Committee to Combat Hate
February 25, 2026**

Good morning Speaker Menin, Chair Salaam, and Members of the Committee to Combat Hate.

It is my pleasure to join you today to testify regarding the discrimination protections in the City Human Rights Law, as well as Intro 388. I am JoAnn Kamuf Ward, Deputy Commissioner of Policy and External Affairs of the New York City Commission on Human Rights (“Commission” or “CCHR”). With me today for Q & A is Jose Rios Lua, the Commission’s Chief of Staff.

The Commission welcomes this opportunity to speak about the agency’s efforts to combat unlawful discrimination at work, in housing, and in places open to the public, when that discrimination is on the basis of the more than 25 protected categories in the City Human Rights Law.

For over 50 years, the Commission on Human Rights has been tasked with investigating and resolving complaints of discrimination, as well as engaging in public outreach to raise awareness and prevent violations of the City Human Rights Law.

City Human Rights Law Protections Against Discrimination

The Commission is mandated to investigate, prosecute, and adjudicate violations of the New York City Human Rights Law, which is a civil anti-discrimination law. Under the New York City Human Rights Law, it is illegal to discriminate against individuals based on their actual or perceived religion, race, gender, national origin, and sexual orientation, among many other protected categories.

The main areas of reported discrimination to the Commission are in housing, the workplace, and places open to the public (referred to as public accommodations in the Law). Accordingly, housing providers, employers, and business owners are legally obligated not to discriminate under the City Human Rights Law, and are a focus of CCHR’s public facing materials, training, and outreach.

Reporting Discrimination to the Commission

The agency’s Law Enforcement Bureau (LEB) is the part of the agency that intakes, evaluates, and investigates allegations of discrimination brought to the Commission by members of the public. Any individual can contact LEB via our live hotline (known as the Infoline), to report allegations of discrimination that are within our jurisdiction as determined by Law. Agency staff answer calls live during business hours, five days a week. The vast majority of claims come to us via calls to this line.

Year over year, the most commonly reported allegations of discrimination we receive relate to disability, gender, and race, as well as voucher discrimination in housing.

When a member of the public contacts CCHR, the LEB team assesses whether the allegations that are reported to the Commission may violate the Human Rights Law. If they do, then LEB staff can take a range of actions to either intervene proactively or to investigate to determine whether the case should be prosecuted. These actions may include sending cease and desist letters, requesting information on policies and practices, making document demands, and interviewing witnesses. Where a caller's allegation is within the jurisdiction of another city agency, or where individuals are seeking legal assistance, CCHR can refer callers to a range of resources.

If an allegation is determined to be within CCHR's jurisdiction and pre-complaint interventions or conciliation efforts were either not appropriate or not successful, LEB will investigate to determine if it is more likely than not that discrimination occurred, known as finding "probable cause." Thereafter, the Bureau may continue conciliation efforts and can take the case to an administrative trial. Case resolutions can include requiring Respondents to engage in training and other measures to ensure compliance with the City Human Rights Law in the future, including changes to policies and practices, as well as damages for individuals, and civil penalties. Virtually every settlement or order requires Respondents to take a training, which CCHR staff provide. These are interactive trainings, developed by CCHR, in close consultation with community groups, academic institutions, and other subject matter experts.

Because CCHR knows there is widespread underreporting of discrimination, the Commission is continually assessing how to build trust and bridge the gap between communities and government.

Commission Education and Outreach

In addition to mandating trainings in Commission case resolutions, the agency also pro-actively offers trainings to businesses, organizations, and individuals, regardless of whether a complaint has been lodged against them. These include cultural competency trainings, as well as trainings that focus on the rights of New Yorkers and the obligations of business owners, housing providers, and employers.

One example of a cultural competency training is Understanding the Jewish Experience and Antisemitism, which promotes understanding of the City's diverse Jewish communities and elaborates on the City Human Rights Law's provisions that protect Jewish New Yorkers from discrimination. Additional cultural competency trainings, aimed at preventing discrimination and building trust among communities, include:

- Understanding Muslim Experiences and Combating Anti-Muslim Bias;
- Anti-Black Racism, Race, and Color Discrimination; and
- Protections Against Gender Identity and Gender Expression Discrimination.

In 2024, the Commission also launched a training on Protections Against National Origin, Citizenship and Immigration Status Discrimination.

CCHR's trainings are complemented by our outreach work, which is conducted with community and faith partners. The Commission's FY 25 annual report highlights partnerships across diverse New York neighborhoods that allowed us to engage with over 150,000 New Yorkers. I will mention just a few. The Commission has partnerships with Latino organizations, Caribbean community partners and Asian

American and Pacific Islander groups in Queens, as well as collaborations with African Diaspora organizations in the Bronx and Staten Island. CCHR also works directly with faith leaders to participate in engagements ranging from a Racial Reconciliation Roundtable to work with a Jewish-Evangelical Interfaith Group, as well as outreach to individuals at synagogues, mosques, and temples.

Citywide Efforts

These initiatives and the work of the Commission are just one piece of the City's broader efforts to prevent and respond to bias and hate in New York City. Work to combat bias and hate is also core to the Office for the Prevention of Hate Crimes (OPHC), which was established in 2019. In FY 25, for the third consecutive year, the Commission partnered with OPHC to administer the Community Project Grants, wherein OPHC provides \$10,000 to grassroots efforts aimed at reducing bias. Past awardees include Hindus for Human Rights, T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights, Wagner College Holocaust Center, Glow Community Center, and the African International Collaborative Center. The Commission is also part of the interagency taskforce to be led by the Mayor's Office to Combat Antisemitism, which includes OPHC and NYPD.

Turning to Intro 388, the Administration supports the intent of ensuring effective pathways for members of the public to report actionable hate and bias and to connect with resources to vindicate their rights. However, there is an existing city infrastructure to address bias and hate, and there are pathways for the public to report unlawful discrimination to CCHR and to report hate-based violence to the NYPD, as well as data reporting by agencies – which are all disaggregated in different ways. Accordingly, the Administration looks forward to learning more from stakeholders and to further dialogue with Council on how to most efficiently and effectively operationalize Council's objectives, consistent with Constitutional guardrails.

In closing, thank you for this opportunity to discuss the ways the Commission, and the Mamdani Administration, are working to prevent and respond to bias and hate in New York City.

The Commission will continue working to ensure that all New Yorkers receive the protections guaranteed to them under the City Human Rights Law regardless of religion, gender, race or national origin. We look forward to continuing this work in collaboration with sibling agencies, including the NYPD, the Mayor's Office for the Prevention of Hate Crimes, the Mayor's Office to Combat Antisemitism, and with the Council.

We look forward to your questions.

CATHOLIC COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL

191 Joralemon Street, 2nd Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11201

**Testimony of Joseph Rosenberg, Executive Director
Catholic Community Relations Council
New York City Council Committee on Combat Hate
Security Perimeters at Houses of Worship
February 25, 2026**

Good morning, Chair Salaam, and members of the Committee on Combat Hate. I am Joseph Rosenberg, Director of the Catholic Community Relations Council representing the Archdiocese of New York and the Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens.

We thank the Committee for holding this hearing on such an important and timely matter. At a time when hate crimes against religions are on the rise, and incidents against synagogues, mosques, churches, and their schools are increasing, our City must stand together, united against such abhorrent acts.

Such solidarity includes supporting legislation allowing the NYPD to create a buffer zone outside of houses of worship to ensure the safety of people entering from being threatened, harassed, and intimidated. A similar bill establishing a buffer zone for educational facilities is also supported. Students, teachers, and faculty of public and nonpublic schools must not be placed in a situation of being afraid to enter these buildings. Parents need to be assured that schools in our City will be safe for their children, and a place for learning, not a place for fear.

Houses of worship and both public and nonpublic schools are often considered “soft targets” vulnerable to violent demonstrations, threats and tragically, often attacks. Violent incidents against them continue to grow across our entire country.

In New York City, both the Archdiocese of NY and the Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens, like many other religious organizations, have seen the rise of crimes against houses of worship. These include acts of vandalism, destruction of religious statues, and the disruption of religious services. We stand with all other faiths in declaring and reiterating that an attack on one religion is an attack on all religions, and frankly, is an attack on all New Yorkers.

The bills on today’s Committee agenda create pathways to protect our institutions to hopefully ensure that people should not fear entering houses of worship or enrolling their children in our City’s public and nonpublic schools.

Like all other faith-based organizations, we are fortunate in having the NYPD as a strong partner. They have been responsive and proactive in confronting these challenges. We are pleased they are given the flexibility to establish policies and practices consistent with the legislative intent of these measures.

Three bills, in particular that are strongly supported are:

1. Int.1 and Int.175, which charge the NYPD to create a plan establishing buffer zones at entrances and exits of houses of worship and educational facilities, including nonpublic schools, and,

2. Int. 327, which allows nonpublic schools to be reimbursed by New York City for the cost of installing and operating video cameras to record all activities within 15 feet of the entrance and exit of each school. It is modeled after the successful and widely used City Council initiative that allows nonpublic schools with 150 or more students to be reimbursed by New York City for the cost of hiring security guards from security companies vetted by the City. Int. 327 would provide protection for the students, teachers and faculties of these institutions while assisting the NYPD in determining who may be attempting to illegally enter the school to disrupt classes or even worse, harm those within.

We thank Speaker Menin and the City Council for recognizing the threat against religious institutions and all schools throughout our City, and for introducing, and hopefully, soon passing these important bills.

Thank you.

February 25th, 2026

Central Synagogue
123 E 55th St
New York, NY 10022

To New York City Councilmembers,

I will soon mark my 10th anniversary as Executive Director of Central Synagogue. When I arrived in 2016, I was surprised to learn that Central had armed guards. Today, we have twice as many guards, metal detectors, bomb-sniffing dogs, protective barriers in front of our beautiful, landmarked Sanctuary, and much more. We have to; synagogues around our country have seen violent attacks, arson, vandalism, and threats.

The rise in antisemitism across America and in our City is deeply alarming. So too is the rise in hate crimes against all minority communities with more than half of them anti-Jewish hate crimes, although Jews make up a far smaller percentage of our City's population.

I am here in my role as a Jewish professional to share what keeps me up at night: it is the safety of my community.

Central Synagogue is a large and diverse congregation. Thousands of people — toddlers and teenagers, parents and grandparents — walk through our doors each week. They deserve to enter a synagogue where they feel safe. Where they can pray, mourn, celebrate, and gather without fear or interference. Where every person is welcomed with dignity.

And yet, we have received threats. We have been targeted. We conduct regular active-shooter drills. We place emergency instructions in our pews explaining what to do should the unthinkable occur. This is not how sacred space is meant to feel.

We are grateful that the City Council recognizes its responsibility to ensure that Jews and all people of faith can gather to worship in peace, safely and without intimidation.

Our community will continue to lead with openness, strength, and resilience. But we cannot do it alone.

Marcia Caban
Executive Director



The New York City Council
Committee to Combat Hate
Honorable Yusef Salaam, Chair
Testimony of the Dignity in Schools Campaign - NY

Good afternoon, and thank you, Chair Salaam and members of the New York City Council Committee to Combat Hate. I am the Director of the Dignity in Schools Campaign of NY (DSC-NY), a coalition of over 25 New York City organizations that work to create safe and supportive learning environments in NYC Public Schools. We encourage students, parents, educators, and organizers to engage civically, advocate, and protest for school-based restorative justice, mental health access, and immigrant protections, while working to eliminate police, surveillance, and punitive discipline in schools.

The slate of bills being debated today in the name of safety would essentially **prevent protests and demonstrations from taking place and increase police presence and surveillance**. Our schools and other public systems are most effective when communities have agency and the training, resources, and protected rights to speak and assemble to help shape the systems that serve them. Therefore, we urge you to oppose all proposals to create protest-free buffer zones around healthcare centers, places of worship, and educational facilities, stop targeting all protected free-speech activities, and do not waste public funding on private school camera surveillance systems.

At a moment when we are seeing alarming instances of law enforcement overreach, growing facism, and hostility towards protesters, it is deeply troubling that New York lawmakers would move to expand police presence in our public spaces and hamper free speech and assembly rights. Such actions risk intensifying an already troubling atmosphere of suppression and further curtail students' and workers' civil liberties.

Suppressing free speech does not make people safe. The buffer zone proposals are unconstitutional, and criminalize speech, ultimately increasing the number and intensity of encounters between civilians and overzealous law enforcement, a result that will disproportionately endanger not only certain viewpoints but also communities that are already over-policed.

Because places of worship and educational facilities are everywhere, these bills would make most of the city off-limits to all protests. The bills could prohibit and criminalize countless demonstrations, even if a protest is merely passing by. The legislation would become another tool for surveillance, mass arrests, and selective enforcement, especially against communities of color and the movements challenging entrenched power. There is already widespread use of excessive force by the NYPD against protesters, particularly by its violent Strategic Response Group.



Policing and surveillance in and around schools is harmful for all students. We cannot waste \$35M to give to private schools for the cost of video surveillance cameras, especially when the city is proposing cutting restorative justice and mental health services in public schools due to budget gaps. Additionally, security perimeters around schools would increase police presence and policing of Black and Brown students, creating a hostile environment on campus.

NYPD school cops are able to contribute names to a secret list of people it deems gang members called the Criminal Group Database (the “Gang Database”), with little or no evidence. This database is racially discriminatory, with over 99% of people in the database being Black and/or Latinx. Youth as young as 13 years old have been added by school cops for things like doodling. A person does not need to have committed a crime to be included in the database. **In a time when Trump and other political leaders are prioritizing youth criminalization, deportation and detention of “gang members” with no justifiable evidence and expediting deportations, we cannot let more NYPD officers contribute to the ongoing surveillance and criminalization of our young people.**

It would be a grave mistake for the council to react to peaceful protests, including the youth and community groups protesting for Palestinian human rights, by imposing buffer zones that would restrict free speech directly and indirectly. As a network that works for dignity, liberation, and freedom from state violence for all of our communities, DSC-NY stood with students who walked out and denounced the escalating genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, because youth know that there can be no dignity in schools under the specter of deadly state violence and genocide. We were heartened by the growing calls for Palestinian freedom around the world, many of which are led by youth. **We cannot silence young people’s calls to end genocide, to protect their communities, or to ensure the safety and freedom of all youth across the globe.**

Our community wants safety, but not at the expense of our rights and freedoms. If our elected leaders are truly concerned about our safety, they would make a concerted effort to push the federal government to reinstate a “sensitive locations” policy and establish real sanctuary zones where ICE and police cannot terrorize our communities, including in schools, courthouses, hospitals, parks, religious institutions, ceremonies AND demonstrations.

Real safety comes from communities that are civically engaged and have the agency to publicly demand freedom and justice. That type of agency stems from the rights institutionalized in our constitution to speak and assemble.

We need safety and our rights. Anti-protest buffer zones are antithetical to those ends. Therefore, we demand:

- No anti-protest buffer zones around healthcare facilities, places of worship, or educational facilities
- Stop targeting all protected free-speech activities
- No public funding should be wasted on private school camera surveillance systems



Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Andrea Ortiz, Director of Dignity in Schools Campaign - NY.

Submitted by:
Andrea Ortiz
Director
Dignity in Schools Campaign - NY



Good afternoon,

My name is Kat Green and I am the founder of Endora, a non-profit that provides security consultation to human rights organizations. My work began with protecting abortion facilities, and expanded cross movement to support any organization that is targeted by hate groups, due to the significant overlap in players that target vulnerable communities.

I am here to express my opposition to Julie Menin and Eric Dinowitz' proposed "buffer zone" bills around places of worship and educational facilities.

THESE BILLS TARGET FREE SPEECH AND THE RIGHT TO PROTEST. But perhaps more importantly, they do not provide any novel protection to the organizations they claim to support, and may put them at greater risk. Historically, inhibiting free speech around dissenting opinions contributes to conspiratorial thinking, and promotes violent rhetoric and actions against marginalized communities. And as we have seen in the case of the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act being disproportionately applied to inhibit free speech and freedom of the press in Minneapolis, any legislation passed to protect an institution needs to be looked at critically in how it can be misused to provide cover for authoritarian motives. Places of worship are already protected by both the FACE Act and hate crime laws. The proposals accelerate the escalating national criminalization of dissent, and would compound the abuse of existing legislation, which the Trump administration is now weaponizing to prosecute protesters and journalists.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH & JUSTICE ORGANIZATIONS BROADLY OPPOSE THE BILLS. THESE BILLS WOULD RESULT IN INCREASED POLICE PRESENCE, INTIMIDATION, AND CHILLING OF FREE SPEECH. The legislation would become another tool for surveillance, mass arrests, and selective enforcement, especially against communities of color and the movements challenging entrenched power already disproportionately targeted by law enforcement. There is already documented and widespread use of excessive force and uneven application of the law by law enforcement against protesters, particularly by the NYPD's Strategic Response Group.

I urge all City Council members, particularly those who claim to value democracy, to vote against these bills. We need our City Council to stand for New Yorkers' freedom of speech and assembly.



JEWES FOR RACIAL & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Subject of Testimony:Intro 0001/ 0175 - Against

Speaker Menin, Chairperson Salaam and Council Members,

My name is Irene Siegel and I'm here with Jews For Racial & Economic Justice. I am also a JVP member, an Arabic Studies professor at CUNY, and teach in after school Jewish education programs for kids. I'm here to voice my strong opposition to the perimeter bills. As a Jewish New Yorker, I care deeply about Jewish safety. With JFREJ, I have co-facilitated trainings against antisemitism as well as Upstander trainings and community safety canvasses to help New Yorkers develop the skills and understanding of what it takes to keep each other safe. I'm also on the [Community Safety Campaign](#) team, with whom I co-developed and wrote our recently released [Bringing Safety Through Solidarity to Life: An Abolitionist Guide to Jewish Community Safety](#); and co-facilitate training to build strong safety infrastructure for Jews and our neighbors. This is because we know that our safety as Jews is inextricable from the safety of the larger Muslim, BIPOC, trans and immigrant communities we're a part of – including the BIPOC, trans and immigrant Jews in our own community– all of whom are the most likely to be racially-profiled and targeted with deadly violence by police. We work toward these solutions because the data clearly shows that giving more latitude and control to police– as your bill would do– does *not* make us safer. (For instance, [unarmed black people are currently more than 3 times more likely to be killed by police than unarmed white people](#).) It is disingenuous to frame these perimeter bills as “police accountability” protocols when their goal is clearly to expand police control of protests and protesters – and most particularly those for Palestinian rights. By its further entrenchment of [the Palestine Exception to free speech](#), and generalized expansion of police authority to target protesters, this legislation will make Jews and all New Yorkers less safe.

As an organizer and a CUNY educator, I have repeatedly witnessed the police brutalizing or intimidating principled and courageous student protestors – most of whom are BIPOC or Muslim – as they protest the genocide in Gaza. Many of these same demonstrators have stood side by side with Jewish New Yorkers just like me to peacefully protest the illegal sale of stolen Palestinian land at fully secular promotional events being held at synagogues. As you've stated yourself, it is protests such as these – against accelerated Palestinian displacement and ethnic cleansing – that are the target of your legislation. Moreover, [dozens of CUNY faculty and staff – including myself -- have been targeted with doxxing](#) or even [fired for expressing support for Palestinians](#). People speaking their conscience against atrocities should not be subjected to the intensified police surveillance and control these bills would authorize. What's worse, these bills further weaponize Jewish identity to justify the expanded policing of political expression.

As the Trump administration wages outright war on our cities and educational institutions with everything from violent masked gestapo to FBI investigations and lawfare, the last thing we need right now is to direct more resources and authority to the police, amplifying the same failed strategies that will continue to make us less safe while undermining our rights. What we need is more resources for

initiatives that meaningfully build safety infrastructure from within and across communities – such as Upstander, antiracism and restorative justice trainings. Most importantly, the data clearly shows that community safety comes not from policing but from strengthening communities through jobs, housing and healthcare. Please oppose these bills and instead feed initiatives and policies that keep Jews and all New Yorkers safe. Thank you.



Good afternoon.

Council Member Salaam, Speaker Menin, Members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify.

My name is Jilian Cahan Gersten, and I am the Chief Development Officer at the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust.

The Museum wholeheartedly endorses City Council's efforts to address heightened hate crime and violence; combat antisemitism, racism and xenophobia; and strengthen our communities' safety. Thus, we want to express our support to the Council Speaker Julie Menin's five-point action plan as it speaks deeply to our shared values and goals.

Since 1997, the Museum of Jewish Heritage, the third largest Holocaust Museum in the world, has served as a vital educational and civic resource, welcoming visitors from across the five boroughs and beyond. Our mission is to educate diverse audiences about Jewish life before, during, and after the Holocaust, while confronting the enduring dangers of unchecked antisemitism and other forms of hate. At a time when xenophobia is on the rise, our work is not only historically important but deeply relevant to the current moment in our city.

According to the NYPD, antisemitic incidents accounted for 57% of reported hate crimes in 2025, although only approximately 10% of New York City residents are Jewish. Jewish New Yorkers were the targets of hate crimes more than all other groups combined. As a Jewish cultural space, we want everyone to feel safe and welcomed when pursuing the goal of educating themselves about Holocaust history and its vital lessons in our museum.

The City's new investment in Holocaust education and legislation to address discriminatory misinformation is a timely, relevant, and proven-to-work method. Young people encounter growing amounts of antisemitic content and Holocaust denial online, contributing to a widening knowledge gap. Holocaust education is mandatory for every eighth and tenth grader in New York public schools, yet teachers often receive no guidance on what topics to cover or counter misinformation. Therefore, we serve an essential role in the city's educational ecosystem by providing free tours, programs, and professional development opportunities. In our work for many decades, we encountered that age-appropriate Holocaust education builds empathy and critical thinking that lead to allyship.

We thank the members of this committee and the entire New York City Council for your leadership and continued support of Holocaust education. Your commitment to the fight against hatred and intolerance ensures that New York City remains a place where history is remembered; lessons are learned, and all New Yorkers feel safe.

Parents Supporting Parent NY



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NEW YORK

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February 25, 2026

Testimony for Committee to Combat Hate

We object these bills

Legislation

- "Require police to submit a plan to establish security perimeters at places of religious worship." (Menin – Int 0001-2026)
- "Require police to submit a plan to establish security perimeters at educational facilities." (Dinowitz and Ariola – Int 0175-2026)
- "Build upon an existing security guard reimbursement program for nonpublic schools." (Narcisse – Int 0327-2026)
- "Establish a hotline for receiving reports from the public regarding incidents motivated by antisemitic, anti-Asian, and gender-based hate or bias." (Restler – Int 0388-2026)
- "Require the Department of Education (DOE) to distribute age-appropriate materials to middle and high school students regarding the risks and dangers associated with social media for youth." (Abreu and Lee – Int 0022-2026)

Dear Committee to Combat Hate,

To the esteemed Chair and Committee members,

I am Tanesha Grant, the Executive Director of Parents Supporting Parents NY. I address you today in my professional capacity, as well as a Black woman, mother, and grandmother. I would first like to commend your efforts to combat hate. However, your "[Five-Point Action Plan to Combat Antisemitism and Strengthen Community Safety](#)" appears to be narrowly focused on a single demographic within our diverse communities. As a Black woman descended from enslaved African people, I must highlight that these five proposed bills fail to address the protection that Black people deserve and have historically been denied in this nation and this city.

Our Black community has been subjected to anti-Black hate and anti-Blackness for over 400 years. This systemic issue has been consistently dismissed or treated as illegitimate. Yet, across this country, documented video evidence exists of numerous attacks targeting Black children, women, and men. Having been removed from my Black family at birth, I experienced early on the profound nature of anti-Black prejudice simply for being born Black. It is an affront to our ongoing trauma that council members would draft legislation that could potentially further marginalize our voices under the guise of combating antisemitism. Such an approach suggests a tiered system of protection where only certain groups are prioritized.

In this, the 100th anniversary of Black History Month in the year 2026, Black individuals continue to strive for equity and equal protection under the law. A recent example is the February CEC 3 meeting, which illustrated the presence of anti-Blackness and the lack of immediate, meaningful action to address it. We were compelled to advocate strenuously simply to bring attention to this incident, despite its involvement of Black children.

These proposed bills also risk limiting our right to peacefully protest near schools, even in the face of clear instances of anti-Blackness within public school environments. Council Member Ressler's bill, in particular, lacks sensitivity as it omits any mention of protections against anti-Blackness. We can no longer compromise the safety of our children while advocating for others. It is unconscionable that anti-Blackness is not explicitly named and addressed in every community. I have personally experienced being subjected to racial slurs by members of various communities, and when we speak out, our concerns are often dismissed through gaslighting.

Council members are advancing legislation without seeking input from Black communities, proposing increased police presence in schools despite the evidence that such measures have historically not ensured our safety. We know that Black individuals are already disproportionately surveilled and subjected to stops at a higher rate than any other community, yet the prevailing narrative remains unchanged. This narrative, in fact, has lethal consequences for Black people. Every time a Black person is found hanging, Black mothers, like myself, immediately contact their children to confirm their safety. For generations, we have been forced to teach our children that their beautiful Black skin will be used as a weapon against them.



How can we support the deployment of police buffers around our schools when the police themselves often fail to record our complaints of anti-Black racism when we report them? Increasing police presence around peaceful protestors renders us less safe, as Black individuals are likely to be the first subjected to brutality while attempting to exercise our First Amendment right to free speech and our right to peacefully protest against policies that disadvantage our children and parents in NYC Public Schools. Furthermore, a deep-seated lack of trust exists between our community and the police.

We do not endorse these bills and will continue to advocate for holistic and equitable legislation that ensures protection for all. Bills that do not address the needs of all people cannot be considered beneficial for all people.

Best regards,

Tanesha Grant

Executive Director, Parents Supporting Parents NY





2/25/2026

Testimony to New York City Council's Committee to Combat Hate

Honorable Speaker and City Council Members, we are Barry Grodenchik, former New York City Council Member, former New York State Assembly member, and current President of the Queens Jewish Community council, and Rabbi Mayer Waxman, executive director of the Queens Jewish Community Council – QJCC.

We are here to testify in strong support of Int 0001-2026, the Committee to Combat Hate's Plan to establish security perimeters at places of religious worship.

QJCC is a 57 year old Queens 501c3 organization, committed to improving the economic, cultural and social prosperity of its clientele. It is the lead agency representing 146 Jewish synagogues, schools and organizations in the borough of Queens.

Many of QJCC's efforts are in regard to general social services, such as addressing food insecurity and assisting clients in accessing affordable health care. QJCC also provides Jewish cultural experiences through concerts and other public events.

However, QJCC has, over the last several years, focused significant attention on programing to repudiate harassment and hate speech. For two years after the pandemic closures were eased, QJCC partnered with groups from Queens' large AAPI community, to stand up to the anti-Asian hate that was being dangerously – and sometimes physically – expressed by far too many shameless miscreants at the time. Right after October 7, 2023, when thousands of Hamas members and their supporters broke barriers, careened violently into the streets of sovereign Israel, and filmed themselves as they tortured and murdered over 12 hundred people and kidnapped more than 250 children, women and men, QJCC immediately coordinated a rally in support of the victims and for the return of the hostages.

Since that time there have been a slew of anti-Israel rallies often – if not always – featuring expressions of outright anti-Semitism. QJCC has thus focused on advocacy and programing against hatred of Jews.

Hatred is not illegal. In America, in New York, hatred, or offensive comments, against most groups, however, often incur social repercussions. Jobs, political roles – society – will often banish bigots. This seems to be the case for people who express offensive hatred or vile representations of people from any ethnicity or group – except when such vile depictions or accusations are spewed against Jews. Against Jews, it has become tolerated to say offensive things.

While hatred is not illegal, threatening is illegal, menacing, is illegal, spitting on people is illegal. Physically accosting people is illegal.

All of these activities have been perpetrated by rioters since October 7, 2023. Some of these actions were reported by people attending events in Park East Synagogue in November, and the Young Israel of Kew Gardens Hills synagogue last month in Queens.

In this light the Queens Jewish Community Council fully supports Int. 0001-2026, which would require the NYPD Police Commissioner to develop and implement a plan to establish security perimeters at places of worship across New York City.

Houses of worship have provided safety through their hallowed halls – their sanctuaries – for well over 1,000 years. “The concept of sanctuary predates [Christianity](#), going back at least as far as [Greek and Roman temples](#) that offered protection to fugitives. Early Christian churches competed with these pagan temples by offering their own protections (<https://www.history.com/articles/church-sanctuary-asylum-middle-ages>).”

This history is the basis for the 1980s’ Sanctuary Movement – a movement that brought about Sanctuary Cities, of which New York City is a prime and proud exemplar.

Can there be any bigger irony than New York City preaching security for anyone as a Sanctuary City – and then allowing the city’s own sanctuaries to be places where people aren’t safe? If the Sanctuaries of New York City aren’t safe then can any New Yorker or anyone in New York be safe?

QJCC strongly supports Int. 0001-2026, and thanks the commonsense writers and sponsors of the legislation.

Testimony in Support of the Buffer Bill

Good afternoon. My name is Rabbi David Ingber. I serve as the founding rabbi of Romemu and as the rabbi of the 92nd Street Y. I speak today on behalf of both communities in support of the Buffer Bill.

I want to begin with something simple: in a democratic society, we must protect both freedom of speech and freedom of worship. These are not competing values — they are coequal pillars of our civic life.

Over the past year, houses of worship and Jewish communal institutions have experienced heightened tension, protest activity, and at times intimidation. Let me be clear: protest is a sacred democratic right. But there is a profound difference between protest in the public square and protest that targets the entrances of synagogues, churches, mosques, and community centers in ways that make people feel unsafe as they gather to pray, to mourn, to celebrate, or to learn.

A buffer zone does not silence speech. It creates space — literal space — for dignity, safety, and access. It ensures that elderly congregants, families with children, and individuals simply seeking spiritual refuge can enter their institutions without confrontation or fear.

In Jewish tradition, we speak of *makom kadosh* — sacred space. Every faith community deserves the ability to create such space without intimidation. This bill affirms that New York City can uphold robust public discourse while also protecting vulnerable communities.

This is not about privileging one group over another. It is about setting reasonable, constitutional boundaries that allow all of us to live together in a city that is both passionately expressive and fundamentally safe.

I urge you to pass this bill.

Thank you.



Int 0001-2026

Plan to Establish Security Perimeters at Places of Religious Worship

Louis D Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law
1675 Broadway
New York, NY 10019

By: David M. Dince
Director of Litigation
New York Senior Counsel

February 25, 2026

The Brandeis Center is an independent, unaffiliated, nonprofit legal organization established to advance the civil and human rights of the Jewish people and promote justice for all. We engage in legal advocacy to combat the resurgence of anti-Semitism on college and university campuses, in K-12 schools, in the workplace, and elsewhere. Our rapidly expanding New York law office focuses on litigation in all of these areas; wherever anti-Semitism is found and can be combated by the law.

We are here today to comment concerning the legal principles to be considered in relation to the proposed bill to amend the administrative code to plan to establish security perimeters (buffer zones) at places of religious worship.

The Brandeis Center is pleased that the Council is addressing a problem that we have been facing in New York and elsewhere. We are facing a crisis of anti-Semitism confronting the besieged Jewish population of New York City, whereby various individuals, groups and organizations have adopted a tactic of protest at houses of worship including synagogues. They are impeding the ability of worshipers to enter or exit the building and trampling on their First Amendment right to freedom of religion. This must be stopped.

The Brandeis Center has been contacted by numerous individuals who have been blocked from entering their Synagogue due to the presence of protestors, some of which have led to assaults and property destruction.

Recent examples of protests at Synagogues include the following:

On January 8th and 9th of this year approximately 200 protestors gathered outside Young Israel of Kew Gardens Hills, blocking the entrance and exit.

On November 19, 2025, demonstrators at the Park East Synagogue in Manhattan blocked the entrance and exit.

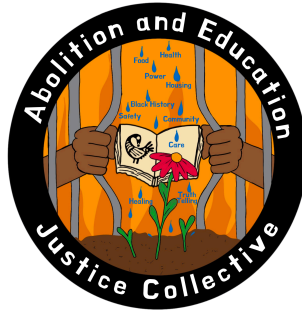
Similar tactics were employed at protests in Los Angeles in 2025 and West Orange, New Jersey in 2024. The clear intent of each of these protests has been to intimidate and prevent Jews from exercising their 1st amendment rights to gather and worship.

The applicable federal statute is the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances, commonly known as the FACE Act. That statute makes it unlawful to use or threaten force to injure, intimidate or interfere with someone attempting to enter a place of worship by physically blocking entrances and exits, or intimidating individuals to prevent them from practicing their religion. The statute has been upheld by the lower courts although not ruled on by the US Supreme Court.

Over 20 states have laws which address this issue in one fashion or another. NY Penal Law 240.70 makes it an A misdemeanor to engage in such conduct. The issue before this committee is therefore the question of buffer zones, which are needed to ensure that the prohibited conduct does not occur in the first place. There are other such bills being considered requiring these buffer zones across the country, such as Arizona, the state of Washington, and NY State. We are aware of no other municipalities who have passed such a law, although it is beyond dispute that no other city is dealing with the same level of anti-Semitism as is New York City.

In summary, in fashioning any such bill: First, the bill must be carefully drawn to apply to all houses of worship. Second, it must recognize the 1st amendment right to freedom of speech and peaceful protest, while balancing those rights against the worshipers equally important 1st amendment right to practice their religion. It is well recognized under the law that appropriate time, place and manner restrictions are lawful when balancing these competing rights.

These incidents have included assaults, destruction of property and the prevention of entry by force and by intimidation. When considering this bill, we ask you to keep in mind the picture of a young mother, holding the hands of her two children, as they intend to enter their Synagogue to worship and attend religious school. They are confronted by a large group of angry protestors, screaming epithets, threatening them and making it difficult, if not impossible, to enter. That is what has happened at each of these protests. Anyone in that mother's place would at the very least be too intimidated to enter. It should never be permitted to happen to anyone.



The NYC Abolition and Education Justice Collective

We are the NYC Abolition and Education Justice Collective, a grassroots collective of community organizers of color working alongside Black, Latine, and working-class families across New York City. We are writing today in strong opposition to Bill #01, sponsored by Speaker Julie Menin, and Bill #175, sponsored by Education Committee Chair Eric Dinowitz, which would create NYPD-enforced “buffer zones” around religious institutions and educational facilities across our city.

These buffer zones would infringe on New Yorkers’ fundamental rights to free speech and assembly while doing little to meaningfully address the root causes of harm or bias in our communities. Creating NYPD “buffer zones” around schools will further criminalize Black and Latine students. In 2022 alone, **87 percent of all NYPD school policing interventions involved Black or Hispanic students**, even though these students make up roughly two-thirds of the NYC public school population (New York Civil Liberties Union [NYCLU], *Safety with Dignity: Alternatives to the NYPD in Schools*, 2023). These interventions can include handcuffing students, removing them from school, detaining them, or arresting them (NYCLU, 2023; NYC Department of Education & NYPD School Safety Data Reports). New York City Council’s own data shows that **Black students represent 66.7 percent of arrests in schools**, including among children ten years old and under (New York City Council Committee on Education Oversight Data Brief, 2022). Research consistently finds that both Black and Hispanic students are significantly more likely than their peers to face juvenile or criminal arrest following an initial school-based incident, contributing to what scholars describe as the “school-to-prison pipeline” (Advancement Project, 2010; Hirschfield, 2018; American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). By increasing the presence of NYPD around school campuses and religious institutions, Black and Latine students and families would be placed directly in the path of expanded criminalization and the documented harms of policing.

A broader body of national research has also found that the presence of police in schools increases the use of suspensions, expulsions, police referrals, and arrests, particularly for Black students and students with disabilities, without improving overall school safety (Skiba et al., 2014). On average, Black and Latinx youth represented 90.9% of arrests, 89.7% of juvenile reports, and 92.3% of court summonses issued, despite being only 66.2% of the student population. Black students were disproportionately impacted by school policing across the board. On average, Black students were only 25.7% of the youth population yet were subject to 54.5% of all policing incidents (Urban Youth Collaborative, 2021). Because educational facilities and places of worship exist in nearly every neighborhood, these bills would effectively make much of the city subject to increased NYPD presence,

surveillance, and enforcement. Student protests, petitions, or even peaceful community gatherings could fall within these zones and be treated as violations, despite they are forms of First Amendment protected speech.

To truly address hate and bias in all forms (anti-Blackness, anti-Semitism, racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, etc.), we need schools to be welcoming spaces that invest in restorative justice practices, Black Studies K-12 curriculum, and culturally responsive education. Expanded policing on wider school campuses and religious institutions does not address hate or bias, but instead instigates further racial profiling, surveillance, and policing of Black and Brown communities. Safety does not come from surveillance and enforcement. It comes from trust, resources, culturally responsive education and meaningful opportunities for young people to engage in dialogue and resolve conflict constructively. An investment and focus on incorporating restorative justice practices in NYC schools addresses harm while ensuring community accountability and safety through open communication and relationship building. Additionally, we demand the creation and implementation of k-12 Black studies and culturally responsive curriculum in schools to combat anti-Black, anti-semitic, homophobic, sexist, and racist hate. Combatting bias and hate must begin with education.

We urge all Council Members, particularly those who claim to value democracy, to vote against Bill #1 and #175. Our City Council must stand for New Yorkers' freedom of speech and assembly while protecting the safety and dignity of our students and families.

Sincerely,

Sohini Das, The NYC Abolition and Education Justice Collective
Imani Wilson, The NYC Abolition and Education Justice Collective
Bri Ruiz, The NYC Abolition and Education Justice Collective