



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TO: Senator Van Wanggaard, Chair
Members, Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

FROM: Barbara Sella, Executive Director

DATE: January 28, 2026

RE: Support for Senate Bill 445, Definition of Antisemitism

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC), the public policy voice of the Catholic bishops of Wisconsin, strongly supports [Senate Bill 445](#), a bipartisan proposal to require that each governmental body in Wisconsin use the official [definition](#) of antisemitism adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) on May 26, 2016. The IHRA antisemitism definition reads:

Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

This definition is accompanied by a list of examples and a statement that “criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic.”

Under SB 445, government bodies must use the IHRA definition when:

evaluating evidence of discriminatory intent for any law, ordinance, or policy in this state that prohibits discrimination based on race, religion, color, or national origin or that provides for enhanced criminal penalties for criminal offenses when the defendant intentionally selects the victim or group of victims or selects the property that is damaged or otherwise affected by the crime because of the victim's or group of victims' actual or perceived race, religion, color, or national origin.

The bill further states that nothing in the bill “may be construed to diminish or infringe upon any right protected under the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution or to conflict with federal or state antidiscrimination laws.”

The Catholic Church opposes antisemitism in all its forms. The Church “decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone” (*Nostra aetate* [In our time], no. 4). On October 5, 2025, Pope Leo XIV [expressed](#) concern “about the rise of antisemitic hatred in the world,” while “continu[ing] to be saddened by the immense suffering of the Palestinian people in Gaza.”

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has also called on each of us to combat antisemitism. In 2022, the USCCB Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs issued a [statement](#) urging all believers in Christ to denounce antisemitism:

Outraged by the deeply hurtful proliferations of antisemitic rhetoric, both online and in-person, and the violent attacks on Jewish individuals, homes, and institutions, we wish to convey our sincere support to the Jewish people. As Pope Francis has stated, ‘A true Christian cannot be an antisemite.’ ([Address to Members of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations](#), June 24, 2013).

We must remain ever vigilant of the various ways in which these dangers arise. In unequivocal terms, we condemn any and all violence directed at the Jewish people, whether motivated by religious, racial, or political grievances. We furthermore denounce any rhetoric which seeks to demonize or dehumanize the Jewish people or Judaism as a religious tradition. We continue to remind ourselves of the shared spiritual patrimony that remains the foundation of our relationship with the Jewish people.

On the USCCB website, the [page](#) devoted to combatting antisemitism includes a December 2024 resource entitled, [Translate Hate: The Catholic Edition](#), which includes a Catholic commentary to the American Jewish Committee's *Translate Hate* glossary of antisemitic terms, tropes, and memes.

Here in Wisconsin, the Jewish community has seen an increase of over 450 percent in antisemitic incidents since 2015. Jewish synagogues, schools, community centers, and other Jewish organizations have been threatened and vandalized. As a result, Wisconsin's Jewish community ends up paying millions of dollars in enhanced security to protect its members.

No one should live in such fear. It is for this reason that Wisconsin laws must recognize when antisemitism is at work and must be ready to combat it.

The bishops of Wisconsin thank the authors and cosponsors of this bipartisan bill and strongly urge you to support it. Thank you.