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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,  
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6300

February 4, 2026

## **VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION**

Mayor Zohran Mamdani  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Mamdani:

I write to you today to express serious concerns regarding your administration's recent rescission of executive orders related to antisemitism and boycotts of Israel, and to seek clarification on your policy objectives and compliance with applicable federal civil rights requirements.

New York City is home to the largest Jewish community outside of Israel, with approximately 1.77 million Jewish residents—about 9.1 percent of the state's total population.<sup>1</sup> Strong leadership against antisemitism and discrimination is essential to the safety and security of Jewish New Yorkers. As Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP), I find it deeply troubling that one of your first official acts as mayor was to revoke two executive orders designed to protect students and combat antisemitism. It is my job to ensure every student feels safe, and at a time when Jewish students feel scared, I am concerned your actions will only exacerbate their fears.

On January 1, 2026, your first day in office, you signed an executive order revoking a series of orders issued by your predecessor, former Mayor Eric Adams.<sup>2</sup> Among those rescinded was an order adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism and an order barring city officials from engaging in or supporting boycott or divestment efforts against Israel.<sup>3</sup>

The IHRA working definition of antisemitism was designed to help governments, educators, and institutions identify and combat antisemitism.<sup>4</sup> Contrary to your public assertions that "a number of leading Jewish organizations have immense concerns around [the IHRA] definition,"<sup>5</sup> many governments, international institutions, universities, NGOs, and private organizations widely recognize and encourage use of this definition to identify and address contemporary forms of

<sup>1</sup> *Jewish Population in the United States by State*, JEWISH VIRTUAL LIBRARY, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jewish-population-in-the-united-states-by-state> (last visited Jan. 12, 2026).

<sup>2</sup> Exec. Order No. 01, City of N.Y., Office of the Mayor, (Jan. 1, 2026), [eo1-prior-executive-orders.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/nyc-01-prior-executive-orders.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Joe Anuta, *Mamdani Defends Eliminating Executive Orders on Antisemitism, Boycotting Israel*, POLITICO (Jan. 2, 2026, 5:10 PM), <https://www.politico.com/news/2026/01/02/mamdani-defends-eliminating-executive-orders-on-antisemitism-boycotting-israel-00709472>.

<sup>4</sup> *Working Definition of Antisemitism*, INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE ALLIANCE, <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism> (last visited Jan. 12, 2026).

<sup>5</sup> Anuta, *supra* note 4.

antisemitism.<sup>6</sup> As of February 2025, 1,266 entities worldwide have adopted the definition, including 46 countries—among them the United States, Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, and France—as well as 37 U.S. states and 98 city and county governments.<sup>7</sup> Abandoning this definition does little to reassure your Jewish constituents.

Executive Order 13899, signed by President Trump, directs federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Education, to consider the IHRA definition when enforcing federal civil rights protections, a directive reaffirmed by Executive Order 14188.<sup>8</sup> Eliminating New York City’s corresponding executive order risks misalignment with federal antisemitism policy and may hinder the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights’ enforcement of Title VI.

The New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) oversees the largest public school system in the country, New York City Public Schools (NYCPS).<sup>9</sup> As of June 2025, the NYC DOE’s operating budget reflected \$2.2 billion in total federal funding.<sup>10</sup> Continued eligibility for this funding is contingent on compliance with federal civil rights laws and applicable executive orders designed to protect students.

Antisemitism is not an abstract concern in New York City; it is a lived reality for millions of students and residents, and its consequences are very serious. Decisions by your administration that weaken established safeguards for Jewish students in New York and are out of alignment with federal executive orders warrant careful scrutiny. Jewish students deserve clear assurance that their safety and civil rights will not be compromised by your administration’s actions.

To this end, I ask that you respond to the following questions, in writing, on a question-by-question basis, no later than **February 19, 2026**:

1. How, if at all, does revoking the executive order adopting the IHRA working definition of antisemitism and the executive order barring boycotts of Israel protect Jewish students?
2. Will your administration adopt a new definition of antisemitism to replace the revoked IHRA definition?
  - a. If so, please provide the new definition.
3. What tangible actions, if any, does your administration plan to take to combat antisemitism at schools and on campuses?

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<sup>6</sup> *Adoptions and Endorsements of the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism*, COMBAT ANTISEMITISM MOVEMENT, <https://ihra.combatantisemitism.org/> (last visited Jan. 12, 2026).

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> Exec. Order No. 13899, *Combatting Anti-Semitism*, 84 Fed. Reg. 68779 (Aug. 30, 2019); *see also* Exec. Order No. 14188, *Additional Measures To Combat Anti-Semitism*, 90 Fed. Reg. 8847 (Jan. 29, 2025).

<sup>9</sup> N.Y.C. Dep’t of Educ., *NYCPS Data at a Glance*, <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/about-us/reports/nycps-data-at-a-glance> (last visited Jan. 29, 2026).

<sup>10</sup> N.Y.C. Indep. Budget Off., *How Federal Budget Changes Could Reshape New York City Department of Education* (Oct. 2025), <https://www.ibo.nyc.gov/assets/ibo/downloads/pdf/education/2025/2025-october-how-federal-budget-changes-could-reshape-nyc-doe.pdf>.

4. Has your administration consulted with the U.S. Department of Education, the Department of Justice, or any other federal agency regarding the potential funding implications of rescinding the IHRA-related executive order?
5. Has your administration issued any guidance to NYCPS regarding how antisemitism complaints will be identified, investigated, and remedied following the rescission of the IHRA definition?
6. Do you believe that the boycott, divestment, and sanction (BDS) movement against Israel is antisemitic? How does rescission of the previous executive order related to the BDS movement make Jewish students safer?

Sincerely,

Bill Cassidy, M.D.  
Bill Cassidy, M.D.  
Chairman  
U.S. Senate Committee on Health,  
Education, Labor, and Pensions