

July 3, 2025

Senator Sasha Renée Pérez
Chair, Senate Education Committee
1021 O Street, Room 6740
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: AB 715 (Zbur/Addis); As Amended July 1, 2025
POSITION: Oppose

Dear Senator Pérez:

The California Teachers Association (CTA) is writing in opposition to AB 715 (Zbur/Addis). CTA is firmly committed to schools that are free of racism, sexism, religious and gender discrimination. These are values that our members believe in, are committed to and for which we fight. Educators seek to foster learning environments for students that support the free exchange of ideas, free speech and tolerance—hallmarks of our democracy. With a regime in Washington D.C. that sows division at all levels of academia and seeks to drive a wedge between communities that should be working together to address hate and discrimination, we are concerned about the impact on students and educators should this bill become law.

There has been some movement in the bill language, after multiple meetings with the authors and bill's backers since we expressed our initial concerns in May. However, AB 715 would still impose limits and define standards for course instruction regarding Israel, Palestine, Zionism, or the Israeli/Palestinian conflict something that we don't do for any other active conflict in the world, e.g., conflicts in Ukraine, Rwanda, Congo. Further, the bill limits what instructional materials can be used regarding the teaching of subject matter related to Jewish people, Israel, or the Israel-Palestine conflict. The bill establishes the singular Office of the Antisemitism Prevention Coordinator within the State Board of Education. Charged in part to track uniform complaints which involve antisemitism and to consult on corrective action plans, the position does not address any other forms of hate or discrimination, something that is equally needed.

Last, at a time when there are those that seek to weaponize public education, AB 715 would unfortunately arm some ill-intentioned people with the ability to do so. We abhor and condemn antisemitism in any form and have been working with the authors to reach a consensus. We care deeply about all students including Jewish students and their experience and achievement in California public schools. We are also concerned with academic freedom and the ability of educators to ensure that instruction include perspectives and materials that reflect the cultural and ethnic diversity of all of California's students. Academic freedom includes the rights of educators to assist students in developing critical thinking skills by exploring and discussing divergent points of view; these discussions are intended to enhance not harm the student learning experience.

The language in AB 715 raises the following concerns:

1. ***The Uniform Complaint Procedure (UCP) was recently amended, and it is premature to open up this language again so soon.*** SB 153 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review), Chapter 38, Statutes of 2024, added requirements to the complaint procedures used for complaints alleging the use of curriculum or instructional materials which would subject students to unlawful discrimination. That measure prohibited the governing board of a school district, a county board of education, or the governing body of a charter school from adopting or

approving the use of any textbook, instructional material, supplemental instruction material, or curriculum for classroom instruction if it would subject a pupil to unlawful discrimination. Further, last year's bill permitted UCP complaints to be filed with a local education agency (LEA) or with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) directly and permitted the SPI to directly intervene without waiting for an investigation by the LEA. Allowing the current amendments to take root demonstrates a commitment to thoughtful policymaking, fostering trust among stakeholders in the process. Additionally:

- a. The recent amendments require adequate time to be tested in practice, as prematurely revisiting the language could disrupt the evaluation of their effectiveness and lead to rushed decisions with unintended complications. Allowing sufficient time ensures that future revisions are guided by data and practical experience.
 - b. Frequent changes to the UCP may confuse stakeholders like schools, districts, and families, who need time to understand and implement the latest updates. Constant revisions can cause frustration and disengagement as stakeholders struggle to keep up with new policies.
2. ***Efforts to strengthen a process weaponized against educators gives more tools to extremists to disrupt public education.*** We have seen meritless UCPs meant to disrupt or challenge policies that support LGBTQ+ inclusivity or to target LGBTQ+ students and staff. Some school districts have faced UCPs to challenge inclusive curriculum, transgender-affirming policies, or student support groups, aiming to roll back progress made in establishing safe and inclusive environments. This misuse of the process has in some cases created a hostile environment for LGBTQ+ individuals, repeated false complaints that lead to increased anxiety and a less welcoming atmosphere for LGBTQ+ students and staff. Any efforts to prohibit certain materials at the classroom level will have a chilling effect on the kinds of conversations students and teachers engage in. At the federal level we are already seeing "anti-discrimination" frameworks weaponized to limit academic freedom. We urge you to avoid a framework that punishes teachers for teaching students.
3. ***We believe we need to stand together to combat hate, discrimination and bigotry in all forms.*** We recognize that fighting antisemitism is the core of the bill. And, we support that fight. As a diverse state, our members have expressed concerns about lifting these experiences of inequity above those of other groups. Focusing on antisemitism alone might be seen as prioritizing one form of discrimination over others, potentially alienating groups facing other forms of systemic discrimination, such as racism, Islamophobia, or anti-LGBTQ+ bias. Creating a role specific to antisemitism could lead to a fragmented approach to combating discrimination, rather than addressing all forms of hate and bias under a unified framework. The creation of an antisemitism coordinator is a politically charged issue, potentially leading to divisiveness rather than fostering unity in combating discrimination. To the greatest extent possible, we urge the authors to focus on addressing discrimination more broadly, which would necessarily strengthen the rights and remedies available in cases of antisemitism.
4. ***Defining ways that educators must talk about Israel, Palestine, and the Israel Palestine conflict compromises academic freedom.*** Placing parameters into Education Code around how people's histories are taught moderates language and content in ways that will limit learning opportunities. Teachers might feel constrained or fearful of addressing the topic altogether if they worry about violating legal requirements, leading to a lack of discussion on an important global issue. Restricting educators' ability to choose instructional materials

could hinder their effectiveness and creativity, especially in a diverse state like California. Mandating a specific approach risk disregarding the lived experiences of students and their families, potentially alienating communities with differing views. Prescriptive language in the law may unintentionally introduce bias, favoring one narrative over another and leading to a less enriching educational experience. Instead, the focus should be on equipping students with critical thinking skills to analyze and understand complex global issues independently.

To ensure Jewish students can continue to engage in our public school system with the same protections and supports we provide to other communities it is critical that we take proactive steps to address antisemitism. While we share the same overarching goal of the AB 715 author and sponsors of combating antisemitism, we have serious reservations about the proposed methods for achieving it. The proposals within AB 715 raise significant concerns about unintended consequences, even though we agree with the importance of addressing this urgent issue. We recommend a different approach:

1. ***Prepare and train educators with the tools they need.*** Building educators' capacity to lead challenging conversations is essential for creating safe spaces for teaching and learning. By equipping educators to discuss difficult topics and evaluate instructional materials we provide our school communities with important safeguards against antisemitism. This means guidance, resources, and professional development opportunities, rather than a compliance-based mindset of enforcement through the UCP. Students are having these discussions currently, so it's incumbent upon our educational system to model how to do so with cultural competency and inclusive mindsets.
2. ***Utilize restorative practices to immediately address incidents of hate and discrimination.*** When incidents of hate or unlawful discrimination occur in school communities, turning these moments into opportunities for learning helps cultivate empathy, repair trust, and support growth. Restorative practices encourage those responsible for harm to take accountability for their actions and understand the impact of their behavior on others and the community. At the same time, these practices give victims a voice to share their needs, concerns, and perspectives, empowering them to participate in decisions about how to make amends. By offering a holistic, human-centered approach to justice, restorative practices support healing for individuals, relationships and the community.

CTA opposes AB 715 (Zbur/Addis) and urges your NO vote when the bill is heard in the Senate Education Committee.

Sincerely,



Seth Bramble
Legislative Relations Manager

Cc: Members of the Senate Education Committee
Assemblymember Rick Chavez Zbur
Assemblymember Dawn Addis