



Council for Human Rights

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Vision

Kitsap County shall be a caring, supportive, and safe community for all its citizens—a community which values each individual, celebrates individual differences, and recognizes the importance of each person's contribution.

Mission

The mission of the Kitsap County Council for Human Rights is twofold:
1) To advise county government and Kitsap County residents on issues related to discrimination, violence and harassment based on race or national origin, religion, age, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, or economic status;
2) Promote the equitable treatment of all citizens and reduce prejudice through education, resource referrals, and advocacy.



KITSAP COUNTY COUNCIL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Commissioners' Office, 614 Division Street, MS-4, Port Orchard, WA 98366

<https://kcowa.us/hrc>

To the Esteemed Members of the Bremerton City Council,

We respectfully urge the Council to reconsider its adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism, passed under Resolution 3377 in 2024. [1]

We deeply appreciate the Council's recent reaffirmation (February 10, 2025) of its unwavering commitment to fairness, dignity, and equal opportunity for all residents of Bremerton, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, or background. In that statement, the Council made clear its rejection of discrimination, bigotry, and any ideology that promotes hatred or division, and pledged to foster a more just and welcoming community. [2]

This local commitment aligns with the State of Washington's recent actions. The Washington State Human Rights Commission adopted two important resolutions: one condemning antisemitism [3], and another expressing solidarity with Palestinian, Arab American, and Muslim communities [4]. Together, these resolutions underscore the need for definitions of antisemitism that both combat prejudice against Jewish people and protect the rights and dignity of all communities.

It is precisely in this spirit that we raise our concerns. While the IHRA definition was adopted with the commendable goal of combating antisemitism, its vague and controversial examples risk conflating legitimate criticism of Israeli government policies with antisemitism. This ambiguity can unintentionally stifle free speech, academic inquiry, and human rights advocacy, particularly for Palestinian, Arab American, and Muslim communities. Such outcomes undermine the principles of equity and inclusion the Council has reaffirmed.

We encourage the City to consider the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (JDA) as an alternate framework [5]. It offers a clearer, more precise definition that:

1. Provide unambiguous guidance in identifying genuine antisemitism.
2. Protect free speech, ensuring that criticism of government policies—including those of Israel—cannot be mischaracterized as antisemitic.
3. Strengthen human rights advocacy for all communities.
4. Reflect broad academic and scholarly consensus.

By embracing an alternative definition, Bremerton would be acting in harmony with its own reaffirmed values and with statewide leadership. Such a step would demonstrate the City's consistency in rejecting bigotry in all forms, protecting civil liberties, and ensuring that every resident feels safe and respected.

Finally, we encourage other jurisdictions within Kitsap County to undertake the same careful review. A consistent, inclusive approach across our region would strengthen our collective efforts to combat antisemitism and all forms of prejudice, while ensuring that legitimate public discourse remains protected.

Sincerely,

Kitsap County Council for Human Rights

Citations:

[1] City of Bremerton. (2024, January 17). Resolution No. 3377: A Resolution of the City of Bremerton Adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism.
<https://www.ajc.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2024-02/Res-3377-Bremerton-IHRA.pdf>

[2] City of Bremerton. (2025, February 10). RESOLUTION NO. 3316: A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Bremerton, Washington, affirming the City's commitment to the principles of equity and inclusion and will continue to implement practices that seek to improve opportunities and quality of life for all residents, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, country of origin, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or religious beliefs.
<https://www.bremertonwa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/12020/City-Council-Statement-on-Supporting-All-Residents-PDF>

[3] WA Human Rights Commission Resolution Condemning Antisemitism,
<https://www.hum.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/Resolutions/WA%20Human%20Rights%20Commission%20Resolution%20Condemning%20Antisemitism.pdf>

[4] WA Human Rights Commission Resolution in Solidarity with Palestinians, Arab-American, and Muslim Communities, Honoring Washington Human Rights Advocates, https://www.hum.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/publications/Resolutions/WA%20HUM%20Resolution%20in%20Solidarity%20with%20Palestinian%2C%20Arab-American%2C%20and%20Muslim%20Communities_Adopted%20September%2026%2C%202024%28V.2%29.pdf

[5] The Jerusalem Declaration. (2020). The Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism.
<https://jerusalemdeclaration.org/>