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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 284

Offered January 17, 2025

Reaffirming support and unwavering commitment to the welfare, security, and survival of the State of Israel and to Jewish Americans and to the inherent rights and safety of those who support Israel regardless of their faith or persuasion.

 Patron—Sturtevant

 Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth of Virginia has a well-established commercial and civic relationship with companies located in Israel that seek to improve the lives of people living in both Israel and the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of the Commonwealth and of Israel share many of the same values, including individual liberty, democratic principles, and the rule of law; and

WHEREAS, during the 2015 Regular Session of the General Assembly, the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, passed House Joint Resolution No. 659, which commended the State of Israel "for its cordial and mutually beneficial relationship with the United States and with the Commonwealth of Virginia," and expressed support for the State of Israel "for its legal, historical, and moral right of self-governance and self-defense upon its lands"; and

WHEREAS, the Hamas terrorist organization launched a brutal, highly organized, and unprecedented attack upon Israel and its citizens in the early morning hours of October 7, 2023, in which more than 1,200 men, women, and children, including 46 Americans, were murdered by Hamas, and 251 men, women, and children, including 12 Americans, were taken hostage by Hamas; and

WHEREAS, Hamas, a proxy of Iran, was founded with the stated goal of destroying the State of Israel and has been designated by the United States as a Foreign Terrorist Organization; and

WHEREAS, in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attack on Israel by Hamas on October 7, 2023, there has been a significant rise in incidents of antisemitism, including physical and mental harassment, hate speech, intimidation, and alienation in the Commonwealth of Virginia, particularly on its university and college campuses, creating an atmosphere of fear for Jewish people, supporters of Israel, and those who defend such persons; and

WHEREAS, on October 31, 2023, Governor Glenn Youngkin, in response to the aforementioned acts of antisemitism, issued Executive Directive Six to combat antisemitism and anti-religious bigotry in the Commonwealth of Virginia and on campuses; and

WHEREAS, acts of hate, discrimination, and violence based on religion or ethnicity have no place on college and university campuses or within K-12 schools and are a direct violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act; and

WHEREAS, freedom of speech and expression are foundational principles, but when these principles are used to promote violence, hatred, or discrimination on the basis of religious beliefs, national origin, or ancestry, leaders, college and university faculty and administrators, and public school officials have the right and obligation to speak out and take all appropriate actions to defend such rights; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby reaffirm its support and unwavering commitment to the welfare, security, and survival of the State of Israel and to Jewish Americans and to the inherent rights and safety of those who support Israel, regardless of their faith or persuasion; and be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the General Assembly call upon law-enforcement agencies in the Commonwealth of Virginia to remain vigilant in protecting Jewish students and those who support Israel regardless of their faith or persuasion in the Commonwealth's K-12 schools and colleges and universities from acts of crime and unlawful discrimination that tend to manifest at such times; and be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the General Assembly encourage all K-12 schools, colleges and universities, and student organizations to ensure that Jewish students, faculty, and staff can pursue academic and personal aspirations without fear; and be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the General Assembly call upon the Commonwealth of Virginia and all agencies thereof to promptly provide educational resources and assistance to combat antisemitism to any educational institution or student organization in the Commonwealth that requests it; and be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the General Assembly call upon the Commonwealth of Virginia and all agencies to ensure that at the beginning of every academic school year at all K-12 schools and institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth, all staff and student leadership groups are informed of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism, the availability

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59 of educational resources and assistance to combat antisemitism, and the ongoing obligation to ensure that no
60 student, faculty member, or administrator is a victim of antisemitism or anti-Israel hatred.