

ARTICLE 19

NINETEENTH ARTICLE

Submitted by: Michael A. Burstein, TMM12 and Scott Gladstone, TMM16

WHEREAS according to the Combined Jewish Philanthropies' most recent Greater Boston Jewish Community Study, "Greater Boston is home to the fourth-largest Jewish community in the country with 248,000 Jews.... More than half of Jewish households are located in Boston, Brookline, Newton, Cambridge, Somerville, and the surrounding towns";

WHEREAS Jewish residents have made numerous contributions to the civic, business, and social life of Brookline;

WHEREAS in May 2006, President George W. Bush proclaimed the month of May to be Jewish American Heritage Month;

WHEREAS the Town of Brookline sponsors an Annual Town-wide Commemoration of Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. as a result of a Resolution passed by Town Meeting on May 25, 2010; and Town Meeting passed a Resolution on November 15, 2017 to commemorate the second Monday of October as Indigenous Peoples Day and to establish a Committee to organize an annual commemoration; and Town Meeting passed a Resolution on December 8, 2022 to also commemorate May as AAPI Heritage Month;

WHEREAS celebrating Jewish American Heritage Month will help fight against antisemitism and recent surges in antisemitism by highlighting the positive contributions of Jewish Americans;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT TOWN MEETING URGES THAT:

1. The Select Board proclaims the month of May as Jewish American Heritage Month in Brookline in recognition of Brookline's Jewish community and its contributions;
2. The Select Board establishes an annual celebration of Jewish American Heritage Month during the month of May, to be organized by ODICR in conjunction with a Jewish advocacy organization and/or a newly established Jewish American Heritage Month Celebration Committee;
3. The Select Board ensures there is adequate funding for the annual Jewish American Heritage Month celebration;
4. The people of Brookline celebrate the month of May as Jewish American Heritage Month with a variety of activities, such as attending the annual celebration and learning more about the history, culture, and lives of their Jewish neighbors, classmates, and friends; and

5. The Public Schools of Brookline observe Jewish American Heritage Month by organizing activities in celebration of the month and providing instruction on the history and culture of the Jewish American community.

or act on anything relative thereto.

PETITIONER'S ARTICLE DESCRIPTION

This Resolution would make the federal and state Jewish American Heritage Month observance an official annual event sponsored by the Town.

The importance of such a resolution cannot be overstated. In the past year, there has been a surge of antisemitism across the country and the world. Facilitating a better understanding of and highlighting the positive contributions of the Jewish American community will help all residents of the town to recognize and celebrate their Jewish neighbors as well as all Jewish Americans today and throughout US history. Such better understanding and appreciation is the best vaccine against the scourge of antisemitism.

As reported in the Times of Israel, Brookline is not immune from the national surge of antisemitism (see <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/navigating-a-post-october-7th-world-as-a-jewish-educator-in-brookline/>)

The AJC State of Antisemitism Report 2023, also speaks to the urgency of this warrant article.

- **63% of American Jews** say the status of Jews in the U.S. is less secure compared to one year ago. In 2022, this number was 41%. In 2021, it was 31%.
- **46% of American Jews** say they altered their behavior out of fear of antisemitism. In 2022, this number was 38% — a significant eight percentage point jump in one year.
- **24% of current or recent college students** say they felt uncomfortable or unsafe at a campus event because they are Jewish.
- **1 in 4 current or recent college students** say they have avoided wearing, carrying, or displaying things that would identify them as Jewish out of fear of antisemitism.
- **More than 1 in 5 American Jews** who experienced antisemitism online (22%) reported that the online incident(s) made them feel physically threatened.
- **62% of American Jews** reported seeing or hearing antisemitism online or on social media in the past 12 months.
- **74% of U.S. adults** say antisemitism is a problem in the United States today, compared to 68% who said so in 2022, and 60% in 2021.
- **56% of U.S. adults** say antisemitism has increased over the past five years, compared to 47% who said the same in 2022, and 44% in 2021.

- **92% of U.S. adults** believe “Antisemitism affects society as a whole; everyone is responsible for combating it.”

Besides educating all people about Jews and Judaism being an effective bulwark against antisemitism, there is also an intrinsic value in celebrating the unique contributions of Jewish residents in Brookline, as part of the mosaic of other faiths, ethnicities and nationalities that make Brookline the vibrant and excellent community, which we all enjoy. We support all efforts to educate about, embrace and celebrate every community within Brookline. The more the better. This proposal is just one piece of that larger effort.

SELECT BOARD’S RECOMMENDATION

ADVISORY COMMITTEE’S RECOMMENDATION

November 19, 2024 Special Town Meeting

19-4

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