

Good Afternoon,

My name is Irene Lehrer Sandalow and I am a board member of the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs, the nation's oldest Jewish social justice organization working here in Chicago for over 50 years combating poverty, racism and anti-Semitism in partnership with Chicago's diverse communities. For decades we have mobilized, organized, and advocated to protect the rights of all Chicago residents.

Today's proposed resolution brought to the human relations committee matters to me, my family, and my Jewish community.

I am an immigrant.

My mother fled her home country because her family was in danger.

My grandparents are Holocaust survivors.

I am afraid today.

I am afraid as a Jew, as an immigrant, and as a parent of two children who wonder if it is safe for them to be open about their Jewish identity.

I am afraid as I am watching how our country's political climate allows for, and even promotes, hostile discourse and actions that target and harm minorities, immigrant communities, and people of color.

Today's proposed resolution is important to the Jewish community. Like many American communities, we came to this country looking for opportunity, looking for a better life for our families fleeing persecution. Throughout history, we have been targeted as strangers and many of us in the Jewish community have inherited family legacies of persecution and economic exploitation that parallel the experiences of today's immigrants and people who in this new political climate are living in fear. As a community who knows too well the pain and oppression of being treated differently, we have a unique responsibility to protect the rights of ALL Chicago residents.

Not only does our history compel us to protect the rights of all residents. Our Jewish tradition reminds us time and time again that we were strangers too in the land of Egypt. We cannot forget our experiences as "outsiders." It's our moral responsibility to not stand idly by.

We, as a Jewish community, know what can happen when people are stripped of their rights, when civility is abandoned and we allow for darkness to prevail.

I am proud to have become an US citizen, because I always believed that the United States of America embraced and celebrated diversity. That our diversity is our strength and our pride. As a member of the Jewish community, as an immigrant, and as an American, I am proud to stand alongside the communities who support this resolution. We are all linked in our fight against oppression and are stronger in our united voice promoting justice and equal protection.

Chicago needs to be a place where we all residents feel, know, and are treated like we belong, and in these difficult time, we need to publicly reaffirm that at least here, in Chicago, we are all united by a common vision of solidarity and humanity. The Jewish Council on Urban Affairs is proud to stand with this coalition in support of this resolution, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak in front of you today.