



JON PLUMER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 42nd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony – **AB 816** – The Holocaust Education Act

Assembly Committee on State Affairs
Wednesday, February 12, 2020

AB 816 adds the Holocaust and other genocide education to the model academic standards for social studies in Wisconsin's public, charter, and private schools at least once during grades 5 through 8 and at least once in grades 9 through 12.

AB 816 is a necessary step in combatting the documented lack of awareness about the Holocaust and other genocides among youth. Two-thirds of American millennials surveyed in 2018 could not identify what Auschwitz was and 22% said they haven't heard of the Holocaust. To me, that is unacceptable. If we forget our history, we are bound to repeat it. Atrocities such as the Holocaust and other genocides should never, ever be forgotten. While I understand that genocides are typically already taught in Wisconsin classrooms, we cannot take that for granted. Adding it to the model academic standards ensures that every student in Wisconsin fully understands what the Holocaust means and how many lives it took.

Holocaust education is currently required in 11 states with legislation pending in 17 others. Wisconsin has been an education leader in this country for a long time and adding this requirement continues to move us forward and be an example for other states.

The Wisconsin-based Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center is committed to providing materials, programming, and professional development necessary to implement this requirement at no additional costs to schools.

We have heard some concern that since only the "Holocaust" has been mentioned in the bill that other genocides such as the Armenian genocide would not be taught. I take this concern seriously, but believe that the language "and other genocides" covers other genocides throughout history and would allow organizations committed to remembering those genocides to submit their curriculum to DPI to be included, should this bill become law.

Lisa Subeck

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

TO: Members of the Assembly Committee on State Affairs

FROM: Representative Lisa Subeck

DATE: February 12, 2020

RE: 2019 Assembly Bill 816, relating to: incorporating the Holocaust and other genocides into the state model social studies standards and requiring instruction on the Holocaust and other genocides.

Representative Swearingen and Members of the Committee on State Affairs,

Thank you for your consideration today of Assembly Bill 816, which requires that the state Superintendent of Public Instruction incorporate the Holocaust and other genocides into the model academic standards for social studies and to develop model curriculum and instructional materials. Under the bill, the state Superintendent must consult with an organization in the state that provides Holocaust education programs to public and private schools and offers tools and training to teachers and with a state agency in another state that has developed model Holocaust curricula. The bill also requires a school board, independent charter school, and private school participating in a parental choice program to include instruction on the Holocaust and other genocides at least once in grades 5 to 8 and once in grades 9 to 12.

12 states currently require Holocaust education, and legislation is pending in at least 17 others. It is time Wisconsin joins this growing list of states. I was startled to learn that two-thirds of American millennials surveyed in 2018 could not identify what Auschwitz was and that 22% said they had never heard of the Holocaust. As a Jewish woman whose family was directly impacted by the Holocaust, this terrifies me. Ensuring such atrocities never happen again requires knowledge and recognition of our past.

I can remember interviewing Holocaust survivors when I was a teenager as part of a youth group project to preserve their stories. They shared survival stories that were nothing short of heroic, but were also those of tragic loss. While they survived the horrors of the Holocaust, they also told of those who did not make it. It was not unusual to talk to survivors who had lost their entire families - who were separated from their parents, siblings, or children as they were led to their deaths.

As the number of Holocaust survivors shrinks, it is up to us to ensure that their plight is never forgotten and that the unforgivable events of the past never happen again. Today's children will likely never meet a Holocaust survivor. While they will not have a chance, as I did, to listen to their firsthand stories, it is incumbent upon us to make sure this history is never repeated.

78TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

STATE CAPITOL P.O. Box 8953, Madison, WI 53708 PHONE (608) 266-7521 TOLL-FREE (888) 534-0078

EMAIL Rep.Subeck@legis.wisconsin.gov WEB <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/assembly/78/subeck>



30% post-consumer fiber

As a young adult, I visited the Anne Frank house in Amsterdam and a concentration camp in Belgium during a youth group trip to Europe. And a couple of years ago, I visited Stutthoff concentration camp in Gdansk, Poland, with my family. It is hard to explain the overwhelming feeling of loss and sadness – and fear – visiting these camps invokes. 65,000 people of more than 30 nationalities died there. Some died from the terrible living conditions, slave labor, or disease. Other were tortured or executed by shooting, hanging, or in the gas chambers. I saw large glass cases of their belongings – shoes, clothing, and more – left behind by those who were killed. There was a wall where some of those were held there carved their names. My dad scanned the wall looking for names of his ancestors who lost their lives there. While facing this history is horrifying, it is critical we never forget so these atrocities never happen again.

Anti-Semitic incidents are on the rise in our state and our nation, and more than a quarter of all recorded anti-Semitic incidents in Wisconsin took place among students or on campus. In a recent poll, 22% of millennials said they had never heard of the Holocaust – double the percentage of US adults who said the same. This highlights the need for Holocaust education in our schools.

The time to add Wisconsin to the growing list of states requiring Holocaust education is now. I urge you to pass AB 816 to do our part in ensuring these atrocities are never again repeated.

Testimony before the Assembly Committee on State Affairs
Assembly Bill 816
February 12, 2020

Thank you, Representative Swearingen and committee members.

As the number of living Holocaust survivors and witnesses dwindle, it is up to us to ensure that the unforgivable events of the Holocaust are never forgotten and never repeated.

Assembly Bill 816 adds Holocaust education to the model academic standards for social studies. In addition, it guarantees that Wisconsin students learn about the Holocaust at least once during middle school and once during high school.

Holocaust education is currently required in 11 states with legislation pending in 17 others.

Our goal is to ensure that Wisconsin students understand the important lessons of the Holocaust and the dangerous consequences of rising anti-Semitism and religious bigotry.

This legislation is a necessary step in combatting the documented lack of awareness about the Holocaust among youth. Two-thirds of American millennials surveyed in 2018 could not identify what Auschwitz was and 22% said they haven't heard of the Holocaust.

The Wisconsin-based Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center is committed to providing materials, programming, and professional development necessary to implement this requirement at no additional costs to schools.

I'd like to thank Bev Greenberg and everyone who traveled to Madison to speak and register in favor of this bill. I know you will hear some amazing testimony including from Holocaust survivors.

Thank you for taking the time to hear Assembly Bill 816. I hope to count on your support for this important bill.

Wisconsin State Capitol
2 E Main St
Madison, WI 53703
United States of America

To the members of the Assembly Committee on State Affairs,

Thank you for taking the time to listen to our plea for support of Assembly Bill – 816 in favor of Statewide Middle and High School Holocaust Education in Wisconsin.

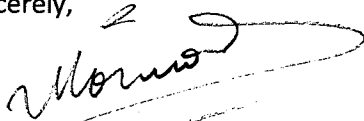
Please, make no mistake, AB-816 is not about telling classroom teachers what to do. I am the Leader of Inclusion at Catholic Memorial High School in Waukesha. For 13 years, I ran my family's small business and, before that, I obtained a Ph.D. degree in Biochemistry from the Medical College of WI. In my current role, I have met intelligent, the hardest-working, and the most generous people ever: classroom teachers.

This bill is about where Wisconsin stands on teaching our youth the historic, social and economic context of the largest genocide in history that they may stay vigilant. It is about helping teachers give students the tools so they can make their own conclusions; such as the student who, in a field trip to a Holocaust museum, said: Dr. Olague, there are small versions of the Holocaust happening in the world right now, we should not wait until it gets this big to act!. Or the students who realized the devastation when, they were told that out of the three full buses, only a handful would have returned home that day, if they were a of a certain ethnicity or practiced a given religion in the 1940's Europe because their neighbors were too scared to stand up.

George Santayana's "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" use to fill my heart with dread and doubt. The collaboration that has given birth to this bill has turned my dread to hope that, lead by you, the people of Wisconsin will join the many other courageous states that support comprehensive teaching of the lessons of the Holocaust: lessons too painful to tell and too telling to keep silent.

Please, empower our students for a peaceful future by helping their teachers to teach them the truth.

Sincerely,



Monica Olague-Marchan, Ph.D.
3626 Oak Valley Lane
Waukesha, WI. 53188

LYNN DZIADULEWICZ

EDUCATOR, CATHOLIC MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL, WAUKESHA

RESIDENCE: 9556 BEVERLY PLACE, WAUWATOSA, 53226

**PERSONAL STATEMENT OF FEBRUARY 12, 2020 IN SUPPORT OF
ASSEMBLY BILL 816 ON HOLOCAUST EDUCATION**

As a parent and teacher of young adults, I am very concerned about the lack of understanding of the horrific realities of the Holocaust and insensitivity towards the subject which seems to be growing in our country. Worse than that, I find it disturbing that so many younger Americans hold onto false and downright faulty knowledge about the Holocaust. This would explain why denier claims have increasingly influenced the young minds of so many American students. Statistics, like those gathered by Pew Research, bear out the harsh reality that many teenaged Americans do not know how many Jews perished in the Holocaust or that Hitler came to power through a democratic process.

My informal classroom surveys align with these facts.

When I give lessons on the Holocaust in my theory of knowledge and theology courses, I begin with a little informal survey of my students to find out when they remember first learning of the Holocaust and how much they already know about it. I begin in this way because, of course, I want to adjust my teaching to the level of prior understanding about the Holocaust that my students have. I'm also inspired to begin in this way because I have very vivid recollections of what I learned in high school about the Holocaust through historic newsreel films which included haunting and powerful images of concentration camps, refugees and Nazi propaganda.

As I explain this to you, I wonder if each of you can recall - as I speak - a particular image...a class discussion...a talk given by a Holocaust survivor... or a lesson you learned

about the Holocaust when you were young..... those impressions stick with you for a lifetime.

And if you become an educator like me, you realize that you must ensure that the students you teach will be instilled with recollections that will stick with **them** for a lifetime so that they too will be motivated to do their part to ensure the Holocaust is never forgotten or that they will be inspired to collect and pass along more knowledge about this history to others.

But, sadly, over time the consistency across institutions of learning has not been there to make sure that ALL students graduate from high school with exposure to Holocaust education. I see evidence of this in my own classroom.

Time and again I learn through the informal survey of my students that some have had barely any exposure to the subject before they arrived in my high school classroom. While I am proud of the cross curricular work my colleagues and I do to teach our high school juniors about the Holocaust – to ensure they learn about the insidious way this hatred grew...to ensure they understand how challenging yet important it can be to stand up against what one knows is unjust and to ensure that they are instilled with a steely resolve and commitment to remember this history and work to ensure it is never repeated – I know that these lessons are not currently taught in all of our schools in the state of Wisconsin.

But they need to be taught in all of our schools in the state of Wisconsin...so that we don't continue to see high school students acting with insensitivity as those seen in the Baraboo High School pre-prom photo that went viral on the internet a few years ago and drew attention to antisemitism here at home in Wisconsin. We don't want antisemitism to be "at home" anywhere and the best way to begin to work to that end is by making sure it is not "at home" in our home – our own beautiful state of Wisconsin.

Please seriously consider adopting Bill 816. With this act in place, students will gain exposure to the lessons of the Holocaust which go far beyond learning the details of its history... which powerfully impact learning experiences and lasting understanding of lessons

in many different related areas, including but not limited to:

- Human dignity and diversity: appreciating the inherent dignity of every human person and cherishing the ways in which we, as members of the human family, are both similar and different from one another
- Social justice: particularly as it applies to civil rights and the history of the Black Holocaust in the United States
- Bullying: how to recognize bullying, appropriately respond to it, and build one's moral strength to avoid being an enabling bystander
- Citizenship: the importance of being an informed and active citizen who strives to constructively promote justice even in the most challenging situations

Across the country there are amazing programs designed to train teachers and equip them with top quality teaching materials. I have had the privilege of participating in two such programs – the **Bearing Witness Summer Institute** in Washington, D.C. (sponsored by Georgetown University, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, ADL and other organizations) and the **Olga Lengyel Institute for Holocaust Studies and Human Rights**, led by Sondra Perl in New York City. Both programs are offered solely on a full scholarship basis for all of the teachers who attend and include one or two weeks of top-notch training, dozens of books, DVDs and teaching guides, air fare, transportation, food, lodging and evening entertainment for the duration of the program – all covered by the generous benefactors of each program! Most importantly, while participating, teachers are able to network with other teachers, meet experts in the field and visit with Holocaust survivors. Sadly, when I attended each program I asked whether there had been others from my state who had previously attended and learned, both times, that only a few teachers from Wisconsin had participated before me. Bill 816 would provide incentives for teachers to take advantage of these incredible learning and networking experiences.

For those teachers unable to be out of state for one or two weeks at a time, we have Wisconsin based organizations willing and well equipped to support Holocaust education for our middle and high school students. One resource that's well established throughout Milwaukee and southeast Wisconsin is the **Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Educator Resource Center** (or **HERC**) which offers many excellent teacher workshops that expand the depth and breadth of Holocaust education to include these subjects. HERC works tirelessly to make these powerful and relevant programs and extensive teaching materials available at no cost to educators. HERC also helps educators by organizing survivor talk presentations given by local survivors of the Holocaust and by offering generous financial support for student experiences such as Holocaust field trips to nearby museums. At an event sponsored by HERC I had the privilege of hearing the survivor talk of Samuel R. Harris, author of *Sammy: Child Survivor of the Holocaust*. Following the talk, I was able to chat with Mr. Harris about what I could do to inspire more teachers to ensure that the lessons of the Holocaust are passed along to the next generation. It was then that Mr. Harris clasped my hand and the hand of my teacher friend and asked us to please work to pass a Holocaust education bill in Wisconsin. My friend and I both responded that we would.

Today I am gratified to be able to make good on my promise to Mr. Harris.

In closing, I ask you - as legislators - to do your part by adopting the Holocaust Education Bill 816 which will ensure that all Wisconsin middle school and high school students receive education on the Holocaust. In so doing, you will be acting with the kind of steely resolve and commitment that is greatly needed right now to remember this history and the many areas of learning it can illuminate while working to make certain that the Holocaust is never repeated.

Assembly Committee on State Affairs
February 12, 2020

**Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Testimony for Information on Assembly Bill 816**

Background

The Holocaust is currently part of Wisconsin academic standards for social studies. These standards were recently revised in 2018.

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has a transparent and comprehensive process for reviewing and revising academic standards. The process begins with a notice of intent to review an academic area with a public comment period. The State Superintendent's Academic Standards Review Council examines those comments and recommends whether or not to revise or develop standards in that academic area. The State Superintendent then authorizes whether or not to pursue a revision or development process.

Following the State Superintendent's authorization to revise or develop standards, a state writing committee is formed to work on revision or development of those standards for all grade levels. That draft is then made available for open review to get feedback from the public, key stakeholders, educators, and the Legislature with further review by the State Superintendent's Academic Standards Review Council. The State Superintendent then determines adoption of the standards. Additional information on the standards review process can be found at <https://dpi.wi.gov/standards/council>.

The recently revised social studies standards call for all students to learn about historical Genocides. In fact, there is specific language related to learning about the Holocaust or Shoah. This language can be accessed on page 43 of the standards, located at https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/standards/New%20pdfs/2018_WI_Social_Studies_Standards.pdf and is copied below. Please note that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights referenced below was established in large part after World War II because of the Holocaust.

Historical Eras and Themes Students in Wisconsin will learn about the history of Wisconsin, the United States, and the world. When teaching Wisconsin, United States, or World History, the following are topics for exploration:

2. Human and civil rights, including suffrage, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and current and historic genocide, including the Holocaust or Shoah.

Additionally, eras and themes in the social studies standards for US History include the World Wars and Political Science Standard 2 has a learning priority of “Asserting and Reaffirming of Human Rights”. This includes rights for different groups of traditionally marginalized people.

Analysis

AB 816 requires the State Superintendent to incorporate the Holocaust and other genocides into the model academic standards for social studies and to develop model curricula and instructional materials on the same subject.

Under the bill, in developing the model curricula and instructional materials, the State Superintendent must consult with an organization in this state that provides Holocaust education programs to public and private schools and offers educational tools and training to teachers and with a state agency in another state that has developed model curricula on the Holocaust. Finally, the bill requires a school board, independent charter school, and private school participating in a parental choice program to include instruction on the Holocaust and other genocides in its respective curriculum at least once in grades 5 to 8 and once in grades 9 to 12.

Academic standards adopted by the State Superintendent are used to guide instruction. The standards, however, are not required to be adopted by school boards and school boards ultimately approve curriculum.

Another option the committee may want to consider is to add the Holocaust to the list of Wisconsin’s special observance days found under Wis. Stats. 118.02. The United Nations General Assembly has already designated January 27 as International Holocaust Remembrance Day. Many teachers use these special observance days as a teaching opportunity to introduce their students to specific historical persons or events being observed on those days. A list of current observance days in Wis. Stats. 118.02 follows below.

- (1) January 15, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.
- (2) February 12, Abraham Lincoln's birthday.
- (3) February 15, Susan B. Anthony's birthday.
- (4) February 22, George Washington's birthday.
- (5) March 4, Casimir Pulaski Day.
- (5m) March 17, for “The Great Hunger” in Ireland from 1845 to 1850.
- (5r) April 9, Prisoners of War Remembrance Day.
- (6) April 13, American Creed Day.
- (6m) April 19, Patriots' Day.
- (7) April 22, Environmental Awareness Day.

- (7g) The last Friday in April, Arbor Day, except that if the governor by proclamation sets apart one day to be designated as Arbor and Bird Day under s. 14.16 (1), that day shall be appropriately observed.
- (7r) June 14, if school is held, Robert M. La Follette, Sr. Day.
- (8) September 16, Mildred Fish Harnack Day.
- (9) September 17, U.S. Constitution Day.
- (9g) Wednesday of the 3rd week in September, as part of Wonderful Wisconsin Week under s. 14.16 (8), Wisconsin Day.
- (9r) Friday of the 3rd week in September, POW-MIA Recognition Day.
- (9t) Wednesday of the 4th week in September, Bullying Awareness Day.
- (10) September 28, Frances Willard Day.
- (11) October 9, Leif Erikson Day.
- (12) October 12, Christopher Columbus' birthday.
- (13) November 11, Veterans Day.



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TO: Representative Rob Swearingen, Chair
Members, Assembly Committee on State Affairs

FROM: Kim Vercauteren, Executive Director, Wisconsin Catholic Conference

DATE: February 12, 2020

RE: Support for Assembly Bill 816, Holocaust and Genocide Education

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC) appreciates the opportunity to offer testimony today on behalf of the Roman Catholic bishops of Wisconsin in support of Assembly Bill 816, which incorporates the Holocaust and other genocides into the state's model social studies standards for education. Assembly Bill 816 also requires instruction on the Holocaust and other genocides in public, charter, and private schools participating in the parental choice programs.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church notes states that:

Actions deliberately contrary to the law of nations and to its universal principles are crimes, as are the orders that command such actions. Blind obedience does not suffice to excuse those who carry them out. Thus the extermination of a people, nation, or ethnic minority must be condemned as a mortal sin. One is morally bound to resist orders that command genocide. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2313)

It continues "Every act of war directed to the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities or vast areas with their inhabitants is a crime against God and man, which merits firm and unequivocal condemnation." (CCC, no. 2314)

While we appreciate that Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has already revised the current model academic standards to incorporate instruction on human rights and the Holocaust and other genocides, the WCC takes this opportunity to acknowledge its support for the continued inclusion of these subjects in our state academic standards as required under AB 816.

Assembly Bill 816 also requires that a school board, independent charter school, and private school participating in a parental choice program include instruction on the Holocaust and other genocides at least once in grades 5 to 8 and once in grades 9 to 12. While the WCC does not generally support mandates imposed upon private schools, in this instance the subject matter is of such great importance that our duty to educate and condemn genocide compels our support for Assembly Bill 816. We appreciate, however, that there is discretion provided for under the bill to allow the private school to develop its respective curriculum based on the model provided.

We urge your support for Assembly Bill 816. Thank you.



School Administrators Alliance

Representing the Interests of Wisconsin School Children

TO: Assembly Committee on State Affairs
FROM: John Forester, Executive Director
DATE: February 12, 2020
RE: AB 816 – Incorporating the Holocaust and other genocides into the state model social studies standards and requiring instruction.

The School Administrators Alliance (SAA) opposes Assembly Bill 816, relating to incorporating the Holocaust and other genocides into the state model social studies standards and requiring instruction in the Holocaust and other genocides.

Our educators in Wisconsin face some enormous challenges in meeting the objectives we have for K-12 education. In a nutshell, I would characterize these primary objectives as follows:

- To improve student achievement for all students.
- To close those stubborn achievement gaps.
- To make sure all Wisconsin students graduate college and career ready.

We currently have lots of statutory requirements directed at schools, some that help schools to achieve these objectives and some that don't. Every legislative session we see several bills that would create new or expanded instructional mandates. And we all know that there are scores of interest groups that believe that schools should be providing children with instruction in many new subject areas in order to meet laudable public policy goals. In short, these proposals, if adopted, would lead school districts to take time, money and focus away from their primary objectives.

I would just pose three questions for the committee as you consider this legislation:

- First, how will this bill help school districts to meet our education policy objectives?
- Given the very big challenges that we face and the important objectives we are working hard to achieve, "How would you like us to use the precious minutes we have in the limited number of instructional days in each school year?"
- Finally, "Who should be charged with the responsibility of determining the curricular priorities that best meet the unique needs of students in each of the 421 school districts – state policymakers or local teachers, administrators and school boards?"

Thank you for your consideration of our views. If you should have any questions regarding our position on AB 816, please call me at 608-242-1370.



Statement in Support of 2019 Assembly Bill 816

Thank you for the honor of addressing the Assembly Committee on State affairs. On behalf of the Superintendent of Schools of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and our nearly 28,000 students in 102 schools, in 10 counties of Southeastern Wisconsin, I would like to state our strong support for the passage of Assembly Bill 816 to require the state superintendent of public instruction to incorporate the Holocaust and other genocides into the model academic standards for social studies and to develop model curricula and instructional materials on the same subject.

The Holocaust, or Shoah, is a seminal event in the history of mankind. More than six million men, women, and children were intentionally, systematically, and ruthlessly exterminated for the singular reason that they were Jewish. While we cannot change what happened, we must acknowledge that the Holocaust was not an inevitable event. Through a thorough and comprehensive study of the Holocaust and other genocides of history, we can learn valuable lessons and insights applicable to contemporary times that must be passed on to today's students...our leaders of tomorrow...so that history does not repeat itself. So that groups of people are not targeted for death due to their race, ethnicity, or religion.

We believe in the necessity of Holocaust education, in our schools taught with a recognition and understanding of the history of our Church, taught through the lens of the Catholic worldview, and taught in accord to the principle of solidarity that "highlights in a particular way the intrinsic social nature of the human person, the equality of all in dignity and rights and the common path of individuals and peoples towards an ever more committed unity." (Pontifical Council on Justice and Peace, Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (2005), No. 192)

We enjoy a genuine, growing partnership with the Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center that allows our schools direct access to reliable, authentic instructional resources. We further partner with HERC to provide direct teacher training. We look forward to our continued journey together on this shared mission.

In closing, please let me reiterate: just as we support the requirements of Act 143 for all schools, the Superintendent of Schools of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee supports requiring Holocaust education in all schools in the State of Wisconsin.

Thank you,

Bruce Varick
Associate Superintendent
12 February 2020

OFFICE FOR SCHOOLS

3501 South Lake Drive | P.O. Box 070912 | Milwaukee, WI 53207
PHONE: (414) 758-2252 | FAX: (414) 769-3408 | EMAIL: varickb@archmil.org | www.archmil.org

Hello, my name is Clara McKee and I am in eighth grade at Northern Ozaukee School District.

This school year has been tough, and learning about the Holocaust has definitely helped me through it all.

A couple of classmates started off the year by calling me and other girls terrible names. They were dehumanizing me, humiliating me because of my gender, calling me derogatory words, and doing harmful actions. I was at a point where I needed to carry my phone with me at all times because I was scared about my overall safety. I did nothing wrong in these situations. I didn't deserve any of this.

I talked to teachers and parents to help get through it all. But they couldn't always be watching me.

None of my classmates or even my friends really helped. They saw that these things were happening, but did nothing. Perhaps they didn't want the same thing to happen to them. I got so upset about why I was being harassed. What did I do wrong?

I saw that more and more people call each other names that are not appropriate. More and more people are making fun of each other just because they are different. More and more people make assumptions about others just because of what they look like or their background. These events aren't only happening to me, they are happening everywhere.

These things shouldn't be repeated. I shouldn't have to be up here saying this. We as a country and as a state should have learned.

Several days later, we started learning about the Holocaust. I learned about the genocide pyramid and how small phrases can quickly turn into small actions, which then turns into violence. I realized that the situation I was in

was kind of like what Jewish people were in at the time. We started learning about the bystander effect as well, and how it is still in the world today. We learned that everyone makes a difference. Even when they are just watching. The Holocaust wouldn't have happened if people weren't bystanders. If people would've helped them.

I realized that the bystander effect was happening to me right at that very moment. Something clicked for my classmates as well, because the next time I was called a name, they immediately came to defend me. They saw that there is strength in numbers.

I never knew that a history lesson could change things in that dramatic of a way, but the Holocaust did.

There are so many people who have had to go through what I have gone through, and are still going through it. There are so many people who are scared to help, or who want to but are paralyzed by fear. If the Holocaust helped me, it can help so many more than you might originally think.

Without learning about the Holocaust, I still would be getting harassed, 6 months later. Since we did, and since so many people have helped me since then, all of the degrading speech stopped. I feel like since my classmates learned about the Holocaust, they can relate to things that are happening right in front of them. But not everyone in Wisconsin is as lucky as we are. Thank you.

Hello, My name is Meredith Clark, and I am an 8th grader at Northern Ozaukee School District.

The Holocaust is a fading memory.

It pains me to stand up here and say that.

How could the biggest genocide in world history be fading, you may ask? Lack of Holocaust education in the curriculum.

The New York Times reported on a recent study of Americans and Millennials. On April, 12, 2018, it was reported that throughout ages 18 to 34, Thirty-one percent of Americans, and forty-one percent of Millennials believe that two million or fewer Jews were killed in the Holocaust; the actual number is around six million. Forty-one percent of Americans, and sixty-six percent of Millennials cannot say what Auschwitz was.

These statistics shock me in a way I cannot describe.

I was given a once in a life opportunity to be able to listen to a Holocaust survivor's story.

Howard Melton came into our class on October 24, 2019. He told his amazing story and it was life changing. He was put in Dachau at the age of 13. Mr. Melton lied for his own safety and said that he was 15 years of age when he was only 13. He did this so he could be put into the working camp, Dachau, instead of the death camps, Auschwitz. Imagine that level of bravery. Knowing that if the truth was found you would be sent to your death.

One day while imprisoned in Dachau, he and the group of boys he was with were told to march. It was said that they were marching to their deaths. As the boys marched in fear, Mr. Melton somehow managed to make a friend. A young boy in the group he was in. It surprised me how Mr. Melton could have made a friend on his death march. But Mr. Melton kept on surprising me with his bravery.

I could not believe that Mr. Melton had the courage to tell his story after all these horrific things happened to him. He was able to turn something terrible into a learning experience. He taught me that if he could share his story, I must tell his story. Or else, his courage and bravery would have been worth nothing.

But was his story all for nothing? Will we even remember it? I ask you to remember Mr. Melton's story when you are making your decision later.

I am telling Mr. Melton's story to all of you because one day he will not be able to tell it himself.

And I will continue to tell his story.

It is my duty. Hopefully others will too.

Do you want his story to fade?

There is a hand full of Holocaust survivors left. The numbers are dwindling.

Soon there will be none.

And who will tell their stories?

We will. We must. It is not an option.

It is the third generation's job to tell the stories of those who cannot tell it themselves.

For those who died in the gas chambers. For those who died of hunger. For those who were beaten to death. For those who were ripped from their homes. For those who were killed just because they were the slightest bit different.

I am representing the 11 million people in total that died in the Holocaust who cannot tell their story anymore.

I hope that one day, my children will be able to tell their stories. At that moment, I will know that their stories will not be forgotten.

1 in 5 millennials do not know about the holocaust. That means there are 1 in 5 millennials who do not know their stories. That means 1 in 5 millennials do not understand their stories.

Without passing this law you are denying every child an opportunity to do something bigger than themselves.

To tell a story.

So please, don't be the thing that stops them from doing that.

Let them be storytellers.

It is imperative that all students are not blocked from learning about the Holocaust. It is a necessary topic that students should learn about in order to prevent it from happening again. If we were to wait to teach students about the Holocaust, there would only be records. I live in a closed community, it is safe, no one is ever segregated for who they are. I did not understand the full reality of the Holocaust growing up. All I knew, all any student of a young age knows, is what we are being taught, which is why students need to be taught about the Holocaust. Howard Melton changed my perspective on this tragic event. He gave me an insider's look into the Holocaust. He made me not want to be a bystander, he made me want to help everyone in every way possible, like I know you all want to do. In order to prevent the Holocaust from happening again, people need to be educated about it. How are people supposed to prevent something that they have no idea about? One of my classmates thought that the Holocaust happened in America, so what might kids even younger than my age think about the Holocaust if they're not being taught about it in school? All of the sacrifices many people have made to prevent the Holocaust from happening again, they should not go to waste. All of the lives ruthlessly taken from this world should not have been for nothing. No one should grow up thinking that the Holocaust never happened, because it did. The world should be accepting that fact, and growing because of it, not denying children the right to learn about their own history, for everyone was involved in the Holocaust. If we do not teach students about the harms of discrimination, and the Holocaust itself, it makes me - and I'm sure all of the survivors of the Holocaust - feel as if we are dishonoring all of the people who died in the Holocaust just because of something they can't change. They did not have the opportunity to change the future, but you have the ability to shape countless lives with one decision. Make sure it's for the better, and history does not get the opportunity to repeat itself.

My name is Izzy Decker and I go to Ozaukee Middle School. Everyone in this room is aware of anti-semitic acts that are happening all over Wisconsin. As in the article "Unmasking of Hate' Anti-Semitic Incidents Rise In Wisconsin" written by Scott Anderson, Anderson states "In Wisconsin, there were 31 anti-Semitic incidents, including 10 incidents of vandalism and 21 harassment incidents" (as of 2017). That is just the documented anti-semitic events. Being a kid with social media, I have personally experienced many acts of prejudice that are related to the holocaust. There have been countless times that I have seen anti-semitism on someone's Snapchat story or Instagram post. They posted swastikas, dressed up as Hitler, and threatened people because of their religion. They made jokes about concentration camps, and about the people who have lost their lives during this terrible inhumane event. Those people who have posted these things on the internet probably do not understand the Holocaust. They don't understand the concept of concentration camps. They do not understand that 11 million innocent people died. They do not understand that the Holocaust isn't a joke. That is why Wisconsin should implement the Holocaust into their education systems. There are many startling statistics about the education of the Holocaust. According to NPR.org, 22% of millennials don't even know that the Holocaust happened. These people are going to be our future political leaders. Would you want history to repeat itself from somebody's lack of knowledge about the Holocaust? I am asking you to help the future of this society and please consider making the Holocaust a mandatory lesson for schools.



February 12, 2020

The Honorable Representative Rob Swearingen, Chair
The Honorable Representative Gary Tauchen, Vice-Chair
Wisconsin State Assembly Committee on State Affairs
State of Wisconsin

Dear Representatives Swearingen and Tauchen,

I write today to support the passage of Assembly Bill 816, relating to incorporating the Holocaust and other genocides into the state model social studies standards and requiring instruction on the Holocaust and other genocides. I am sorry that due to a speaking engagement I cannot attend your public hearing today and make this statement to you and the Committee in person. But please know that my support for this legislation is strong, as I will relate below. I sincerely hope you will encourage passage of this bill, seek similar support from the State Senate, and send it to the Governor's desk for his signature.

It was George Santayana who wrote, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." The standards referred to in AB 816 will enable us all—students in schools, their parents, school officials, public officials, and any resident of our State with humanity in their hearts—to learn and interpret the lessons of the Holocaust: the danger of fascism and totalitarian rule, the ultimate and horrifying effects of bigotry and prejudice, and the sad reluctance of these lessons not being understood in our world today, a world in which we see horrific examples of genocide in our era.

The Holocaust of World War II targeted for death Europe's Jews, Catholics, Roma, physically disabled persons, members of the LGBTQ community, political dissenters, and others deemed 'undesirable' by the Nazi regime. But more than this: the approach of the Third Reich to ban and burn books, to banish intellectuals, to create a counterfeit science of genetics to justify their lethal behavior, and to suppress political opposition all violate the values that we as Americans treasure and have enshrined in our culture. Yet even in our country we see evidence of bigotry and political and intellectual suppression bubbling near the surface. The curricula suggested by this legislation will teach our students to be aware of these dangers and to struggle against them. Please support AB 816 to address these and other matters to teach our students these lessons of history.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. Please contact me if you need for further information.

Faithfully,

Rabbi Jonathan Biatch
rabbi@tbemadison.org

2702 Arbor Drive, Madison WI 53711 • 608-238-3123 • tbemadison.org

Representative, Rob Swearingen, Chair
Representative, Gary Tauchen, Vice-Chair
Assembly Committee on State Affairs

Hello

My name is Caroline Berkey and I will be representing the Holocaust Education Resource center in Milwaukee, and I am in favor of AB-816 (making Holocaust education a requirement in schools across the state of Wisconsin) 11 million people were killed during the Holocaust (1.1 million children). 6 million of those victims were Jewish. Other groups targeted by the Nazis were Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, disabled people, and Roma. Some 200,000 of whom were murdered as part of the Euthanasia Program. And why? Simply Because they were seen as different. These good, kind people were not even seen as human. They weren't seen as people who had lived in their countries for generations. Some people today don't even know what happened during the Holocaust. They refuse to believe that something this horrific, to this extent, could have ever happened in the world. But it did, and we need to teach my generation, and the next, that this is what happens when fear and bias cloud our minds, and when people are too afraid to speak up. Which brings me to why I became interested in the Holocaust. It started with a book, a single story that caught my attention. It was called Number the Stars. I was quite young, but I was astounded as to what happened. The fact that a person, with good friends and a loving family, could commit such acts of atrocity against another person, simply because of their race or beliefs. Friends turned on friends out of fear and judgement. Some people tried to speak up, but they and their families were murdered for it. We must not allow this to happen again in any form. If we were to teach, and learn from our past, then we might be able to have a stronger future. Whether we reach the whole state, or we change one life with one class. That one person could start to read and research about the Holocaust. And that is one more person who remembers. We are the last people who will be able to have primary sources and witnesses from the Holocaust. The faster we enact this bill, more students will be able to hear from the survivors. In conclusion, we should make Holocaust and other genocide education a requirement in schools. So we as a state can agree. We must remember the atrocities of the past, and agree this must never repeat in any form. Never again.

Thank you

Halah Koehn

Ms.McBride

Holocaust Education Act

1-30-20

Holocaust Education Act Speech

My name is Halah Koehn and I believe students should be required to study the Holocaust. Currently, only twelve states require Holocaust education, therefore, one in five millennials don't know what the Holocaust is and are unaware of what happened to an estimated 11 million people with 6 million of those people being Jewish. Consequences of people not being aware of this event include the continuation of anti-Semitic views and possibly with enough growth of anti-Semitic views the chance of repeating the Holocaust as a result of not learning from history.

Another reason students should be required to study the Holocaust is that it inspires kindness and equal treatment of people, therefore, it is important to know the real and whole story. Learning about the Holocaust also helps people understand hardship, realize how their actions affect people, remember the people who experienced the Holocaust. The Holocaust teaches people acceptance, and to embrace differences. Why do our differences matter? According to Scott E. Page, the author of the *Diversity Bonus*, "Diverse groups generally do better than "high-ability" groups at problem-solving or prediction. These are not political statements; they are mathematical truths". One consequence of genocide is that it reduces the capability of the human race, therefore, when students are required to learn about the Holocaust they reduce the risk of repeating such a severe genocide.

Studying the Holocaust can profoundly influence students. When I learned about the Holocaust I felt empathy for the people who were judged by their beliefs and shocked that one group of people could hate another so much that they tried to eliminate them. For these reasons, all Wisconsin students should be required to study the Holocaust.

Good afternoon, my name is Lindsay McBride and I have been a Social Studies teacher for 7 years at Northern Ozaukee, Elmbrook, and West Allis school districts. As a teacher, I have had the opportunity to meet Holocaust survivors as well as have worked closely with the Holocaust Education Research Center. Throughout my career, I have witnessed the rise of hate speech in our schools firsthand. Many students today find it difficult to see the ramifications of comments that they would consider "joking" as well as don't understand the power that symbols can have. This comes from a lack of understanding and the inability to see the humanity of our history. I believe that it is imperative that students are able to make connections to the history that they are learning about so they can become citizens in their communities who don't have a fear of speaking out when they hear or see injustice. We need to as lawmakers and educators show students that their voices have power and every action or inaction affects others.

With the rise of social media, our youth are constantly exposed to abhorrent rhetoric which I often hear repeated in my classroom or in the hallways. I think that kids see it as joking, but they need to be educated on the importance of diversity and the ways in which words can affect people and societies. Through the use of the genocide pyramid, I am able to teach my students the consequences of action and inaction in their lives as well as in the Holocaust. I believe this allows students to make small changes in their lives. Through Holocaust education, I have seen students who are bystanders, speak out more when they see something they think is wrong. I have also seen students who bully or joke using prejudice comments, question the ramifications of their actions. Middle school can be a hard environment for our youth. There is persistent pressure to fit in and they are constantly questioning what their identity is. This can lead to mental health issues which we know is on the rise in our kids. It can be hard for students to find outlets for this pain, but I think the classroom allows for these kinds of conversations.

For the past few years, my friend and hero, Howard Melton, a Holocaust survivor has come to my school to talk to our 8th graders and every time he has come in I have seen a lasting change from our student body. This year, they were even so inspired that they made a class shirt with a quote of his on it. This was completely without my direction and decision making. Students who have been bullied or harassed for their race, sexual orientation, and gender remember his words verbatim and feel inspired by his messages of resilience and hope. Students that find it difficult to challenge hate speech or bullying find their voices, and students who are the bullies are able to make the connections from their actions to the actions of history. One year, a student that was dealing with mental health issues due to her sexual orientation, came to me after his speech and explained to me how much his messages of acceptance spoke to her. She now had the courage to accept who she was. She even wrote a quote of his on post-its and kept it in her locker for the entire year. Another time, I had students stage a sort of intervention against a bully that many of the students were too afraid to say anything against, even his friends. Directly after Howard and Dan Haumschild, a member of the Holocaust Education Resource Center, came in the students rallied behind each other to stand up to him and to communicate the message that his actions of harassment were wrong. They didn't reject him as a friend or classmate completely though. Instead, with confidence and strength, they challenged his behavior, educated him on how it affected people, and when they saw that he was working on changing

his behavior, they accepted him again. I am not sure that the students even knew the direct correlation from the guest speakers and Holocaust unit to their actions, but I knew as I heard the students use terminology like bystander and the way that they referenced Howard and Dan when they were planning their intervention.

The goal of an educational system is to foster actively engaged citizens who will contribute positively to their communities. The only way for students to find this confidence and commitment is for them to see a direct correlation between their learning and the relevance it has on their lives. Wisconsin has an opportunity to do just that; to show our youth that their voices matter just as much as adults. To show kids that the actions or inactions they do every day can affect their lives even more than what they can see in front of them.

I am asking you today to vote for the Holocaust Education Mandate. It is not enough to encourage the education of the Holocaust. We must make it mandatory for our state. Teachers need to know that it is imperative to teach the challenging and controversial topics, because life for teens is challenging and we as educators need to help them navigate the difficulties that they have or will face. By studying the Holocaust they will be able to learn about how oppressive governments rise, how power has in the past been unchecked, and how ordinary human beings make a stamp on history. They can learn from the failures of others while still being inspired and motivated by the heroes of this time period. We need to show our students that they have power and help give them voice to that power. It is in your power to, as lawmakers, pass this legislation so that you help our youth write a better future for our state.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLY BILL 816 - Read time: 2:45

Good morning/afternoon. I am Ruby Sheaffer, this is Laurel Sheaffer, Katie Brooks, Briley Swedlund, and Nicole Wyman. We represent the Juda Public School District from Juda, Wisconsin. We are all strongly in favor of Assembly Bill 816.

We believe that there are many reasons why this bill should be passed.

Currently, our 8th grade class is in the middle of our Holocaust unit. Even though we are only part-way through our unit, there are already many things that it has taught us.

As a person who grew up learning about the Holocaust and World War II, it astounds me that, according to the Conference Claims, "22 percent of millennials don't even know what the Holocaust is." My knowledge of the Holocaust has probably affected me in more ways than I know.

Because of our Holocaust education, we know how the Holocaust started; slow and quietly. Knowing what the beginning of a Holocaust may look like allows us to identify indicators of a potential genocide. This knowledge allows us to recognize and understand Holocaust-related events that are happening in our current society.

The Holocaust is still affecting today's world. Many organizations and education centers were established due to the Holocaust. Learning about the Holocaust creates opportunities for people to reflect on their roles as global citizens, as well as reflect on how they impact the world around them.

Knowledge of these events can help us recognize if a government official is abusing their power as well as how society can be molded in the hands of our government. By being able to recognize these events, we have a chance to protect our rights.

By learning about the Holocaust, we can educate those who joke and comment about the horrific event that is the Holocaust. This teaches them how inappropriate and disrespectful their jokes and comments can be.

Holocaust education helps us understand an important part of both Jewish and Europe's history. It can provide personal history to Jewish and non-Jewish students alike, and can help them learn how the Holocaust affected their family.

It also teaches students the power of abuse, racism, targeted violence, and discrimination. Learning of the Holocaust can teach students about how people should be treated, as well as to stand up for those who are oppressed.

Holocaust education also teaches us why it is so important to preserve the remains of camps and artifacts. If more students learn about the Holocaust, survivors can have a larger platform on which to tell their stories. Preserving evidence and stories is crucial, especially due to decay. The Holocaust ended 75 years ago. Evidence and proof of this event is disappearing. If we don't educate our students, all knowledge of this event will be forgotten.

If more people learn about the Holocaust and other genocides, the stories and events will not be forgotten. Young people today are the future leaders of tomorrow. If we do not start educating our students, an event like this can, and may, happen again.

For these reasons, we are in favor of Assembly Bill 816. Thank you.

Yvonne Audi
Milwaukee School of Languages
Milwaukee, WI 53222
mcgilvym@milwaukee.k12.wi.us
(414)393-5714

Submitted on February 12, 2020

Testimony on Assembly Bill # 816, Holocaust Education on February 12, 2020 in front of Assembly Committee of State Affairs in Conference Room # 225 NW

Mr. Speaker, Thank you for your time. I am in favor of Assembly Bill 816 requiring the state superintendent of public instruction to incorporate the Holocaust and other Genocides into the model academic standards for social studies.

Anyone who's ever watched the West Wing episode on "unfunded Mandates" knows that there are a lot of things states, cities, towns, and schools are required to do without financial support of the mandating authority. However, in these times of increase antisemitism and out-right denial of the Holocaust happening, Genocide and Holocaust education is essential in Wisconsin Schools. The Assembly bill supports institutions inside and outside of Wisconsin assisting educators in learning about the Holocaust and teaching it in their classrooms.

I have been a beneficiary of this instruction already. Working with the Nathan and Esther Peltz Holocaust Education Resource Center, my students not only learn about the Holocaust and Genocides, but they know how to relate those topics to social justice and issues that directly impact their lives. This bill will give teachers support while encouraging students how to think, remember, and become upstanders instead of bystanders.

In Milwaukee Public Schools, my students already face challenges that others do not. They know about violence, snitching, watching incidents and not acting. Throughout the last four years that I have worked with HERC, my students have learned how to understand Holocaust events. My students have learned how to apply they have learned to their own lives and to promote social justice.

This bill will allow teachers across the state to gain the knowledge, materials, and skills necessary to teach Holocaust education to their students. All of Wisconsin's children should be able to discuss the Holocaust and genocide intelligently.

Two highlights of Holocaust education in my classroom for my students are meeting a survivor and creating a piece of ceramic tile art as a culmination project. I invite any of you at any time to come to Milwaukee School of Languages to see the tiles students have created in remembrance of their Holocaust unit in 8th grade.

Please vote for Assembly Bill 816. Thank you for your time.

TESTIMONY OF JENNIFER COBB
Before the Wisconsin Assembly Committee on State Affairs
Madison, Wisconsin
February 12, 2020

Representative and Chairman Rob Swearingen, Vice-Chair Gary Tauchen and other esteemed members of the Assembly Committee on State Affairs, thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of AB 816, The Holocaust Education Bill. Thank you and the more than 36 state representatives and 11 state senators who support this bill.

My name is Jennifer Cobb and I've been a middle school teacher for more than 30 years. Since 2011, I have taught 7th and 8th grade students at the Prairie School in Kenosha.

As a teacher, mother and proud Kenosha resident, I want to express my strong support for this legislation.

The American philosopher George Santayana said: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." I suggest that those who are not educated about the past are condemned to repeat it.

We live in a world where hate has become all too common. In recent years, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), a leading anti-hate organization, has seen heightened levels of biased-based incidents in schools which include Nazi and Holocaust imagery, symbols, references and language. In fact, ADL tracked a 48 percent increase in anti-Semitic incidents in K-12 schools from 2016 to 2018. While many factors contribute to the rise in Nazi and Holocaust bias incidents, the lack of education about the Holocaust and other genocides is a factor. Holocaust and genocide education provides important historical lessons and it also can help students grow as responsible citizens and develop critical thinking, empathy, and social justice skills.

Closer to home, in Wisconsin, the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) of Milwaukee's 2018 *Audit of Anti-Semitic incidents* showed an alarming rise in anti-Semitic incidents. According to its news release, "Mirroring the rise of white supremacy, racism, and anti-Semitism in the U.S. and across the globe, new data shows an unprecedented number of local anti-Semitic incidents. In fact, it is the fifth consecutive year of increased incidents, with a 20 percent increase from 2017. What's most alarming is the change in tenor and tone – incidents were meaner, scarier, more personal, and unsettling. Twenty-six percent of incidents involved youth or took place on school campuses; 45% of incidents were online."

Nine years ago, I discovered a reliable and invaluable resource: the Holocaust Education Resource Center. That Center helped me think about and develop an integrated curriculum with our social studies teachers -- at no cost to my school or to me. Through that resource, we are able to relate the horrors of the Holocaust to the difficult issues my students face.

Today, as our community, our nation, our world -- is becoming increasingly diverse, when it seems difficult to "reach across the aisle" or "put aside partisan differences," the AB-816 is something we can -- and must -- agree on and support wholeheartedly. Doing anything less would deny our children the education they need to create a hope-filled future and have the knowledge to stand up to all forms of bigotry and hate.

Thank you.

James Baldwin said the following about history:

History, as nearly no one seems to know, is not merely something to be read. And it does not refer merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally present in all we do.

History requires us not only to embrace those events that lift our spirits and reflect, as Abraham Lincoln said, “the better angels of our nature,” but also requires us to grapple with those actions and events that call into question the very nature and quality of our humanity. Through warfare; the detention or imprisonment of those who look, think or speak differently from us; the passage of legislation that favors one group over another; or the seemingly isolated or casual act of turning away from an individual who needs our help, we, as a society, must confront the following questions: Why is this happening? Why are we behaving in this way? Will we get through this? How will these actions and their consequences affect the nature of the society and world we wish to leave our children and grandchildren?

In many ways, it actually is surprising that we need to emphasize the need for Holocaust education in our schools. What other event in our history – certainly in the 20th Century – has required us to so closely examine the qualities of human nature and a society that would intentionally authorize the murder of six million children, adults and elders based on one’s religion and traditions? Our formal (Nuremberg) and informal (religious, academic, community-based) efforts to understand why this happened and will it happen again establish the critical underpinnings and rationale for continued education in our schools, our communities and across the country.

As President of Cardinal Stritch University, I have the honor of leading a community comprised of five generations that reflect over 45 countries and all life circumstances. Though communication styles and facility with technology may vary from one generation to the next, our interpersonal and professional interactions with one another have been framed for more than 80 years by four Franciscan Values: Creating a Caring Community, Showing Compassion, Reverencing Creation and Making Peace. In 2019, the University had the privilege to award an Honorary Doctorate in Humane Letters to Mr. Howard Melton – an individual whose life is the epitome of Showing Compassion. As a young man and a Jew, Mr. Melton lost his mother and sister to the terrors of the Holocaust. Separated from his father, he was held both at Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz. When he was liberated at age 15, Mr. Melton weighed less than 90 pounds. He ultimately made his way to the United States, started a family and built two successful businesses in the Milwaukee area. More remarkable than the success of those businesses, or even than his survival, is what Mr. Melton chose to do with his life — to educate others regarding our capacity for compassion by examining what happens when we permit ourselves to turn away from this essential element of our humanity.

As Mr. Melton spoke to graduates, their families and friends, it was apparent that his life experience, and the message he had to share, had a transformational impact on those gathered before him. That transformational effect is essential to carry forward formally and informally in our K-12 curricula. History is inescapable; it is as much present as it is past. Our ability to grow individually and as a community depends on our commitment to learn from our past successes and failures – each of which ultimately determine the strength of the social compact we say we have committed to as a nation.

Wednesday, February 12, 2020

To the members of the Wisconsin State Legislature,

My name is Dr. Corey Thompson and I am an Associate Professor of Teacher Education at Cardinal Stritch University where I have the privilege of teaching a number of courses to prepare our future teachers to be the best culturally proficient teachers they can be. Two of my favorite courses to teach are Education for Diversity and Social Studies methods and during both of these courses the topic of the Holocaust is addressed as I believe it to be of the utmost importance for teachers to have a solid background in one of the most horrendous time periods in our world history. Absolutely, unequivocally the Holocaust should be taught in every teacher education program.

But, even more important than that: the atrocities of the Holocaust, in my humble opinion, need to be taught in every school across the country. I am fully in support of Assembly Bill 816 to have Holocaust education mandated throughout Wisconsin schools. If you look at the comic strip I have provided to support my position, you will see that our children are our most impressionable resources. They gather a lot of information from the media and unfortunately, this information can be erroneous, misleading or downright damaging. I would rather my children learn early and often from qualified educators about any world changing event; the Holocaust is definitely at the forefront of those events.

In 2002, the Klan and Neo Nazis held a rally on the Federal Court House steps in Milwaukee, Wisconsin to promote their doctrine. A doctrine that has spewed violence on many many cultures throughout the years. I have provided a copy of the Milwaukee Journal new article from that very day. It was a surreal experience to have witnessed pure hatred and evil arrive in my home town that day. The number of counter demonstrators far outnumbered the Klan. I am glad I took the conscience step of resistance of being in attendance that day. Also with me that day was my four year old daughter who witnessed the event on my shoulders. I did my best as a parent to help explain the Klan and the Neo Nazis to my daughter. Every parent is their child's first teacher and on that day Abby received a history lesson of epic proportion atop her father's broad shoulders.

Did this living, breathing history lesson stick? Did it make sense to a four year old, who due to the color of her skin will have to navigate a world of bigotry and hate even still in the 21st century? Well, members of the Wisconsin State Legislature, I will let you be the judge of that because the final image I would like to share with you is that of the "protest" sign that my then 4 year old daughter created when we got home from the Klan and Neo Nazi rally in downtown Milwaukee. My wife had been out of town that weekend and Abby wanted her mother to know what we had done in her absence. The sign before you reads: "The KKK has to go mommy!" Unsolicited, my daughter came home, from a Klan rally and created this protest sign. From hands (and mouths) of babes!

Today, Abby is 21 years old, a college graduate who uses her theater degree to work for social justice. I am glad that that epic living, breathing history lesson stuck with her. It has made a difference in her life! But imagine how much more powerful and effective she would be in her vocation if she would have had a consistent Holocaust education woven throughout her K-12 education.

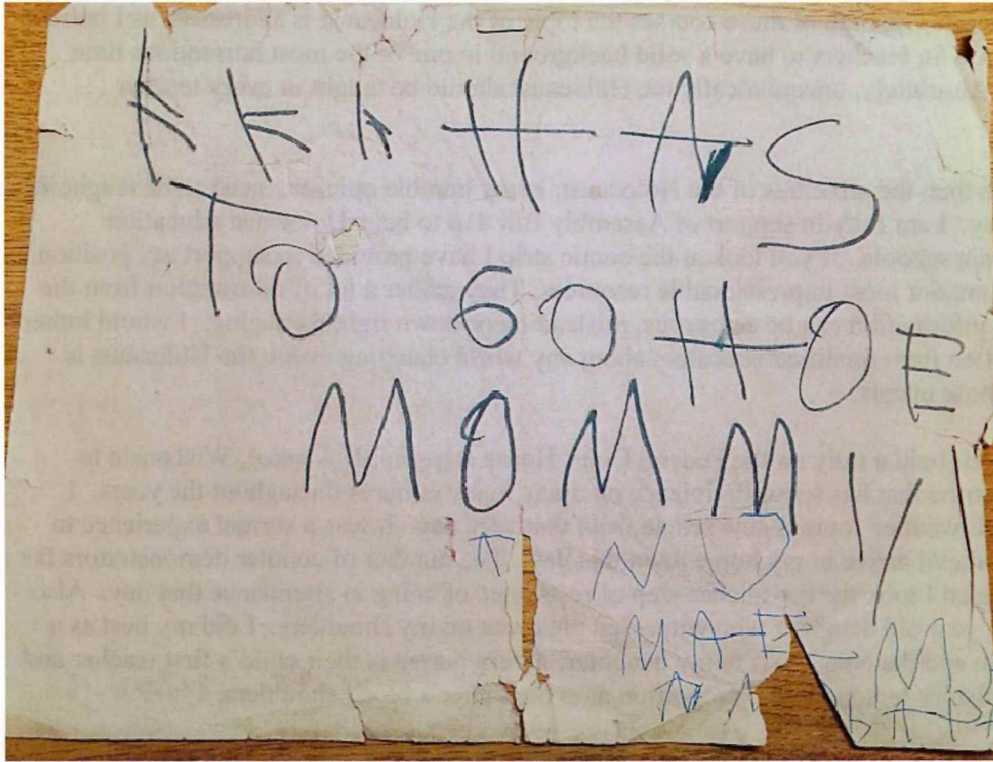
Imagine, all of the thousands of black, white, and tan children all across this great state of Wisconsin attending schools where they have the opportunity to have living, breathing history lessons about one of the greatest atrocities to ever occur on this planet. Imagine what a difference these young people could make in their communities if they received a quality Holocaust education as a systematic part of their social studies education.

It is for these reasons, it is for the children of Wisconsin and it is for my daughter Abby who is now a social justice educator in her own right that I fully support the adoption of Assembly Bill 816.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Corey Thompson
A father who took his 4 year old daughter to a 21st century Klan rally
Associate Professor of Teacher Education
Cardinal Stritch University

“Never Again”



Jill Haberman
168 E Henry Clay Street
Whitefish Bay, WI 53217

Testimony in support of AB-816
February 12, 2020

As an educator, I have myriad means to teach summary, citation, persuasion, and analysis skills; however, no other unit strikes me as more essential to students' development of moral character and compassion than Holocaust education. Learning about the Holocaust and genocide allows my students to experience personal and life-changing educational moments.

My own Holocaust education began when I met Walter Peltz when I was in eighth grade. I cannot recall any of the Social Studies discussions or readings that surely must have prepared us for his talk, but I can still picture this scene: The entire middle school gathered. Mr Peltz sat on a wooden chair in the front of the crowded room. He was dressed in a blue work shirt, sleeves rolled up. With a thick accent and urgency in his voice, he told us about his experiences in Auschwitz. He showed us the number tattooed on his forearm and talked about being made into a number. I felt moved by his intensity. This might have been the first time an adult spoke with brutal honesty to me. It was personal and life-changing.

Later, as an English teacher, I felt determined to include Holocaust education as part of the curriculum despite sometime objections from parents or administrators who felt this was too intense for middle school. The intensity of the topic was exactly why students need to study and discuss the Holocaust. I could not imagine a more powerful opportunity for adolescents to learn about courage, compassion, and integrity. I remember driving to Sheboygan to pick up Lucy Baras to speak to my Port Catholic students about her escape from Skalat labor camp in Poland and her hiding in the forest. She was as comfortable to talk with as my own Grandma Marge. At St Mary's Visitation School, Gerard Friedenfeld described his narrow escape from being put on a train to a concentration camp and expressed reverent appreciation for his British "mother" who took him in off the Kindertransport. They hear survivor speakers like Howard Melton talk about sharing meager food to help a friend stay alive and it becomes personal. They wonder if they would be so generous.

Students grow as human beings because of their Holocaust study. They learn about discrimination and anti-semitic persecution that began long before 1933--in fact Biblically, in our shared faith, back to Exodus and the first Passover. This is essential instruction. As students trace the origins of anti-semitism and Hitler's elected rise to power, the message of leaders and followers and powerful rhetoric becomes personal in the stories of people on all sides. Students learn about heroes, rescuers, resisters, survivors. They gain concrete role models in the Righteous Among the Nations individuals they study through Yad Vashem. Students draw connections to discrimination and persecution in our world today. And it is, indeed, personal and life-changing.

Nancy Kennedy Barnett Testimony for AB-816

Good Afternoon. I am the child of a Holocaust survivor from Budapest, Hungary and have been a second-generation speaker teaching my father's story of survival. My name is Nancy Kennedy Barnett and reside at 7936 N Fairchild Road in Fox Point, Wisconsin. I am an active community volunteer and leader and sit on the board of the Holocaust Education Resource Center in Milwaukee.

My father, now deceased, was in a concentration camp in Europe. When alive, he taught about the Holocaust, speaking to hundreds of people in our State. We have lost witnesses to this horrific time in history, but the lessons and messages cannot be forgotten. When I teach, I not only speak about the atrocities and the past, I use it as a lens to what can happen when hatred and bullying is left unchecked. The dehumanization at the center still exists today!

I am here to tell you why you need to pass AB - 816. I am here to tell you why we need to implement this bill. And I am here to tell you about an interaction with a student that transpired on May 19, 2019, just 9 months ago, when I was asked to speak to 130 8th grade students at North Shore Middle School in Hartland, Wisconsin.

These students had traveled to the Illinois Holocaust Museum in Skokie, Illinois the day before. After I had spent an hour with them, telling my father's story, during the question and answer time, an 8th grade girl raised her hand and clearly troubled, said to me, 'so...I was talking to my mom last night, and my mom says that she has a friend that says the Holocaust never happened...but should have!'

Clearly, this student, now equipped with factual information from the museum and my presentation, was questioning the information received from her mother the night before. She had not been taught the truth before this week. And she wanted to know! We must teach the truth! As the decision makers of tomorrow, students must understand the consequences of indifference and hate. They must not be bystanders, they can be an upstander instead by being someone who gets involved; they can be proactive and have the courage to speak up and care.

Holocaust education not only teaches the history of one of the most violent periods in all mankind, it teaches an understanding of the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping, and an examination of what it means to be a responsible and respectful person today. We must teach tolerance of diversity in a pluralistic society and how to nurture and protect democratic values and institutions.

This bill, once passed, will ensure that we **do** teach a painful part of humanity's past while preparing citizens to live respectfully today.

Thank you very much.

Jodi Majerus Testimony on Bill AB-816

Wednesday, February 12, 2020

I wish to thank the authors of the Bill AB-816 in the Assembly, John Plumer and authors of Senate Bill SB-744, Senator Alberta Darling and Senator Dale Kooyenga.

I am Jodi Majerus.

My parents Ray and Alyce Majerus raised three children, Rick, Tracy and me.

My parents valued education and impressed upon us the learning of history to understand the present. History provides more than dates and events; history shows why and how things happen.

I remember many discussions about the meaning and lessons of the Holocaust – bias, bigotry and hate.

We were raised to respect all individuals and live by the Golden Rule. We were fortunate to have parents like Ray and Alyce that lived these values and instilled them in their children.

Not everyone is as fortunate to have parents like Ray and Alyce.

I stand before you today, asking for your support of Bill AB-816, as all children in Wisconsin need to learn about the lessons of the Holocaust, so it will never be repeated again.

Recently retired, I was asked to serve on the Nathan & Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center's Board of Directors and the Education Task Force to develop a plan to include Holocaust and genocide education in the middle and high schools throughout Wisconsin. I always emphasize the importance of incorporating the Holocaust and other genocide education into the state model social studies program. I then expand on the reasons why it is necessary. I talk about the topic so frequently one of my friends asked:

So, Jodi, are you converting to Judaism?

The answer is no, I am not. But this is not a Jewish, Hmong, Serbian, Catholic, Muslim, Hispanic or green hair issue.

This bill is for all children and people in Wisconsin to learn about the atrocities of the Holocaust so our world will be a better place.

Thank you for consideration of this important legislation.

Jodi Majerus

6421 Betsy Ross Place

Wauwatosa, WI 53213

Testimony of Jodi Habush Sinykin In Support of AB 816

Good morning Chairman, Committee members, I too thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today and ask for your support of AB 816.

Again my name is Jodi Habush Sinykin. I'm an attorney specializing in water law and policy matters, working in Milwaukee and Madison, and I also teach graduate level courses at UWM's School of Freshwater sciences. I love Wisconsin to my bones, it is here where I've grown up and raised my family, established my law practice, and strive to make a positive impact in my lifetime. Like those who spoke before me, I see AB 816 as a rare opportunity—for all of us—to convey a lasting, valuable benefit to current and future generations of Wisconsin children.

For years I've served as cochair of the Holocaust Education Resource Center's Education Committee, which draws an exceptional group of educators from across the greater Milwaukee-Waukesha metropolitan area, all of whom share a commitment to teaching the lessons of the Holocaust to their respective students enrolled at Marquette University High School, Milwaukee Public Schools, Divine Saviors Holy Angels, Waukesha Catholic Memorial and more. I've learned from these educators that when students are given the opportunity to learn about the Holocaust, they develop a greater acceptance of diversity, a richer understanding of America's role in World War II, and an enhanced intolerance to bullying.

Earlier you heard from another such dedicated teacher, _____, who powerfully communicated the value of holocaust education to her own students' academic and ethical development.

And you've heard and seen from students themselves, who care enough about the educational promise of AB 816 to stand before you and ask for your support. A remarkable demonstration of good citizenship—these young people have already been taught to stand up, not stand by—a lesson from their Holocaust studies, well learned. These young people are a credit to our state and show, like nothing else, the incredible promises and value of AB 816's educational impact.

What's more, you heard from one of my own personal heroes, Eva Zaret, a Holocaust survivor, who epitomizes bravery and goodness and concern for future generations in her unwavering efforts to address pervasive ignorance and lack of education about the Holocaust, which can and has led to anti-Semitic incidents here in Wisconsin.

But Eva can only drive so far, do so much. Just as the teachers and school administrators and Holocaust educators you have heard from today, can only do so much, without the educational reach of AB 816.

I end with these words written in April 1945 by one of our nation's most celebrated generals and statesmen, then General Dwight D. Eisenhower, after he toured a German concentration camp during World War II:

“The things I saw beggar description. ... The visual evidence and the verbal testimony of starvation, cruelty and bestiality were so overpowering as to leave me a bit sick... I made the visit deliberately, in order to be in position to give first-hand evidence of these things if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to 'propaganda.'”

With AB 816, we in Wisconsin have the opportunity, in the here and now, to uphold and stay true to this great man's belief in the power of truth and education to maintain a collective memory of the unspeakable horrors of the Holocaust. Wisconsin can and should join the states leading this important effort. Thank you for your support of AB 816.

Respectfully submitted,

Jodi Habush Sinykin

1970 W. Green Brook Road, Milwaukee, WI 53217