



**Written Testimony on HB 33 Main Operating Budget  
Ohio House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education**

**Andrea Brookover, Executive Director of the  
Ohio Holocaust and Genocide Memorial and Education Commission**

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Chair Manning, Ranking Member Jerrells, and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education:

My name is Andrea Brookover, executive director of the Ohio Holocaust and Genocide Memorial and Education Commission. I thank you for this opportunity to share with you the work of our Commission, which was created by Senate Bill 310 in December of 2020 with overwhelming support from both the Ohio House and the Senate. Our Commissioners were appointed throughout 2021 and 2022, and I was honored to accept the position of the inaugural Executive Director just this past June.

During my first 8 months in this new position, I have made many connections across the state with local organizations, museums, resource centers, schools and teachers who are committed to educating Ohio's young people, and in fact **all** Ohio citizens, about the important lessons that can be learned from the atrocities that occurred during the Holocaust and in many other incidents of genocide around the world.

I have come to recognize how crucial the work of the Commission is at this particular time in our nation and our state's history. Over the last year, we have all witnessed celebrity endorsement of antisemitism take center stage in social media. We continue to see hate crimes perpetrated throughout this country and in many others, with race and religion as the primary motivators in these crimes. And we are sadly seeing a rise in acts of antisemitism and racism in Ohio classrooms today, particularly in our high schools and on our college campuses.

As educators and school administrators work to address these issues within their own districts and campus communities, our Commission has an opportunity to provide them with resources that can be added to their own toolkits to combat hate. These resources include those that aid in Holocaust and genocide education. While the histories of the Holocaust and the genocides like those perpetrated in Armenia, Holodomor, and Rwanda, for example, are important historical events to cover in social studies and world history classes, the impact of these atrocities on humanity are just as, if not more, important for young people to learn today.

Using curriculum developed by Ohio-based partners, such as the Nancy & David Wolf Holocaust & Humanity Center and Facing History and Ourselves, and international partners like the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, students learn to identify antisemitism and prejudice, and to recognize the stages of genocide, as they develop skills in empathy, humanity, understanding, and identity. What an opportunity to impact future generations to become upstanders in their own lives, standing up to injustices they see in the world around them.



Guided by our statute in the ORC 197, the Commission is currently in the process of developing the strategic priorities that will determine our course over the next 3 to 5 years. Our first strategic planning session was held just last week in fact, and we are well underway to developing goals that I will touch on here today. These goals will be realized with funding support as proposed in the Governor's budget, where the Commission budget is located within the Ohio History Connection's budget as line item 360400, as the History Connection serves as the Commission's fiscal agent. Our budget line item is \$450,000 for FY24-25, which is an 12.5% increase over our \$400,000 appropriation for the current biennium.

With this increased funding, the Commission will diligently strive to make connections with school districts throughout Ohio to identify opportunities for teacher professional development in teaching Holocaust and genocide studies, and we will make it a goal to work with those schools to provide the teacher training and classroom resources that are recognized as best in practice to educate the young people of our state in the lessons of learning from and preventing future atrocities.

Likewise, our Commission is committed to partnering with those institutions throughout the state, like the Maltz Museum in Cleveland, the Holocaust & Humanity Center in Cincinnati and many other regional resource centers and libraries, to provide public programs to educate Ohio citizens about the Holocaust and other acts of genocide. These programs include speaking engagements given by survivors and liberators, as well exhibitions and commemoration events, like the Governor's Annual Holocaust Commemoration on April 27, that recognize and remember, in our mission to never forget. Our statute also names us as a grant-making Commission, enabling us to provide the funding necessary for our partner organizations to make these programs accessible to all. With your support of this budget, we will be primed to make grants available to eligible institutions in the very near future.

The Commission's responsibilities reach beyond education, and include ensuring that Holocaust and genocide survivors and liberators, as well as educators and partners involved in Holocaust and genocide education and memorialization have access to decision-making bodies in local, state, national, and international agencies, as well as to genocide education and memorial organizations. We have an opportunity to connect and build relationships with communities affected by genocide beyond the Holocaust survivors still among us. We need to recognize and support those refugee communities in our state, like the Rwandan community in Dayton, the Burmese in Akron and the Somalians in Columbus, all of whom sought refuge in Ohio to escape the genocide that their peoples were facing in their home countries and who are now building new lives as Ohioans. Our goal is to give these communities a voice in our local histories and to commemorate their experiences in our collective memory, particularly in Ohio classrooms where young genocide survivors and children of survivors are being educated today.

I have presented just a small selection of the ways in which the work of the Holocaust and Genocide Memorial and Education Commission can make an impact on the citizens of Ohio. With your continued support of our budget, as found in line item 360400 in the Ohio History Connection's budget, we can continue to build the operations and secure the staffing that this great work requires; work that one Dayton Holocaust survivor believes will "make the world a better place". I thank you Chair Manning, Ranking Member Jarrells, and the members of the subcommittee for your time and consideration.