



**Written Testimony on HB 33 Main Operating Budget
Ohio Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee**

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Ohio Holocaust and Genocide Memorial and Education Commission**

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Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee:

My name is Andrea Brookover, and I serve as the 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 legislated in December 2020 by Senate Bill 372, sponsored by Committee Member Senator Rulli. 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.

A national study conducted by the Claims Conference in 2020 surveyed Americans between the ages of 18 and 39 to examine Holocaust knowledge and awareness. The results of this survey found that Ohio ranked 32nd in the nation for overall knowledge and awareness of the Holocaust. Perhaps not coincidentally, since this survey was conducted, the Anti-Defamation League has reported an 82% increase in reported incidents of antisemitism nationally. In Ohio alone, there was a 42% increase in reported incidents of antisemitism and a 13% increase in total incidents of hate and extremism since 2020. If we are to compare the data of the Claim Conference survey and the ADL reports for this time period, it isn't hard to come to the conclusion that the lack of knowledge about the Holocaust may be influencing the rise in antisemitism and hate in our state.

As Senator Rulli and the proponents of SB 372 argued, Holocaust and genocide education is one valuable way to combat hate in our society. Echoes & Reflection, a Holocaust education program founded in partnership with the USC Shoah Foundation, the ADL and Yad Vashem, has found that students who received Holocaust education in high school show higher critical thinking skills and greater sense of social responsibility and civic efficacy*.ⁱ The results of this study also found that students with Holocaust education are more likely to recognize the dangers of antisemitism and discrimination, and they report a greater willingness to challenge intolerant behavior in others. They are much more likely to make connections between the Holocaust and modern day events than students who have not been exposed to this coursework.

Likewise, studies conducted by Facing History and Ourselves, also an internationally recognized organization with a Cleveland office, provide evidence that their long-established Holocaust education program, which “integrates intellectual rigor, engaged academic discussion, and ethical reflection processes for learning history—and then connecting that history to one’s current social and civic concerns, commitments, and participation—is effective in fostering fundamental historical thinking skills that students can apply to understanding new content”.ⁱⁱ



These studies are only a sampling of existing research that make the case that Holocaust and genocide education can not only inform our young people about the atrocities of the past, but can also teach them what is to be learned from these past events; how to make connections to this past within their own lives today; and can instill in them a greater sense of social, ethical and civic responsibility, as well as a greater appreciation for democracies.

The educational duties of the Ohio Holocaust and Genocide Memorial and Education Commission, as defined in the Ohio Revised Code 197, enable the Commission to impact not only K-12 students in Ohio, but also our college students and in fact all Ohio citizens.ⁱⁱⁱ Our responsibilities include inventory and dissemination of educational resources for the classroom, connecting educators to professional development opportunities, and public programming with partners like the Maltz Museum in Cleveland, the Nancy & David Wolf Holocaust & Humanity Center in Cincinnati, the Dayton Holocaust Resource Center at Wright State University, as well as many other regional resource centers and institutions throughout Ohio.

The budget request that the Commission initially submitted through our fiscal agent, the Ohio History Connection, in line item 360400 of \$450,000 for FY24-25 would give us the funding necessary to serve as that connector to resources and programming partner for Holocaust and genocide memorialization and education. We would have just enough to sustain what we've developed over the last year, including our new state website – holocaust.ohio.gov – on which lives a growing digital repository of educational and professional development resources, as well as listings of Ohio museums, exhibits and memorials for the Holocaust and other genocides. We could hire one additional staff to assist with outreach and continue to build out our network of partners.

With the significant increase to the Commission's appropriation as proposed in the Substitute House Bill 33, the Commission would be primed to **become more than simply a connector and a partner among Ohio institutions, but also a leader among state commissions and councils through the country in Holocaust and genocide education.** This increase adds \$1.9 million to the Commission's initial \$450,000 budget for FY24-25 in line item 360400. The amendment for the funding increase, which was submitted by a bipartisan slate of Representatives in the Ohio House, was proposed by Ohio Jewish Communities. After consulting with the Commission, OJC developed the funding proposal on the needs that have been voiced by Holocaust and genocide educators statewide, as well as from conversations with the Ohio Departments of Education and Higher Education. The new budget creates specific funding support for initiatives that could not be realized in the original budget request. These funds, which were again based on the needs expressed by Ohio educators and partners and that align with developing priorities of the Commission, include developing Ohio-based, localized resources for schools to incorporate into their curriculum, such as recording and making accessible the testimonies of genocide survivors and military liberators of those within Ohio communities. It includes transportation funding for school field trips to local museums and memorials throughout Ohio, as well as travel for educators to be trained by organizations within Ohio and those nationally, such as the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in DC. It provides scholarships for university students and teachers to receive instruction in Holocaust and genocide studies, and for the development of this coursework in Ohio institutions of higher education.



While the Commission hopes to achieve all of these incredible opportunities for learning and programming, albeit vastly more slowly over many years, this generous budget increase means we can do this work now. We can bring Holocaust and genocide education to more schools in Ohio now, provide greater access, particularly in our rural school districts, to resources, training and field trips now. We can work with those communities of survivors of the Holocaust that are still with us, as well as the Rwandan genocide survivors in Dayton, the Burmese genocide survivors in Akron, and so many others throughout our state to bring their testimonies into our collective local histories now. We can give Ohio educators teaching tools that can foster humanity, respect and independent thinking in our young people and combat hate and antisemitism in our schools and our communities now.

With the support of the Senate in passing this budget, Ohio would become a leader among the 17 states that have Holocaust and/or genocide commissions and councils with this level of funding commitment. Our Commission is ready and willing to go forward in this important work, to make a significant impact in the learning of our students and educators in this state, to counter Holocaust denial and hate in our communities, and to become a national leader in Holocaust and genocide education.

I thank you Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Smith and members of the committee for your time and consideration.

*One definition of civic efficacy: "The perceived belief someone has about their ability to participate in civic life, assume citizenship responsibilities, and make a difference." Miller, C. (2009). Service learning and civic efficacy among youth with disabilities (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED532187>

ⁱ <https://echoesandreflections.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/College-Survey-Summary-Article-September-2020-a.pdf>

ⁱⁱ A Randomized Controlled Trial of Professional Development for Interdisciplinary Civic Education: Impacts on Humanities Teachers and Their Students. *Teachers College Record*, 117, 020307 (2015).

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-revised-code/section-197.08>