

**Testimony of Susan Reis and Erinn Stark
Co-State Policy Advocates of Ohio
National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW)
Supporting SB 372
Senate Finance Committee
Create Holocaust and Genocide Memorial and Education Commission
DECEMBER 1, 2020**

Chair Dolan, Vice-Chair Burke, Ranking Minority Member Sykes and the entire Senate Finance Committee, our names are Susan Reis and Erinn Stark. We are co-State Policy Advocates of Ohio for National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW). NCJW is a 125-year-old organization that has 180,000 members and supporters across the country and over 2,000 members and supporters in Ohio. Our mission is dedicated to improving the quality of life for women, children and families while safeguarding individual rights and freedoms. As an organization we include in our National resolutions 1. the historically accurate study of the Holocaust and other acts of genocide as part of the regular curriculum in all schools and 2. support of the elimination of genocide and other crimes against humanity. We strongly support SB 372, that would create a Commission that would, among other things, gather and disseminate Holocaust and genocide information throughout Ohio, and bring lessons to the community in a coordinated fashion. We hope you will pass this important legislation out of committee for a full Senate vote.

As the Senate Finance Committee, you are entrusted to use Ohioans tax dollars wisely. This bill is very cost-effective as it suggests a small amount of money be allocated to provide the funding for the staff of the Commission, with the understanding that they could find other ways to fund the actual implementation of the bill through grants and gifts.

This bill, by creating a Commission, will ensure continuity of education outlasting any single administration. Creating legislation alone does not always provide the desired outcome. Mandating Holocaust and genocide education in schools without providing the necessary training for teachers does little to ensure that accurate and meaningful teaching will occur. As stated in the bill analysis, the Commission “will gather and disseminat(e) Holocaust and genocide information throughout Ohio, advising and educating the Governor, General Assembly, and Ohio departments and agencies on Holocaust and genocide memorial and education”. It will help the legislature and the administration to work together to create this important educational opportunity for Ohioans.

SB 372 is being introduced at a particularly timely point in Ohio history. Ohio, as well as the United States as a whole, is experiencing rates of anti-Semitism that we’ve never seen before, according to James Pasch, Regional Director of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) (<https://www.adl.org/news/press-releases/antisemitic-incidents-hit-all-time-high-in-2019>). As Deborah Lipstadt, PhD, historian and Professor of Modern Jewish History and Holocaust Studies at

Emory University said in a presentation to NCJW/CLE members and guests on November 24, 2020, "Anti-Semitism is a threat to democracy; it may start with the Jews, but it never ends there..." It is the morally correct position to take to oppose anti-Semitism and **all forms of hate**. It's not just about history but can teach our children about values as well. Additionally, in a recent study entitled, "A First-Ever 50-State Survey on Holocaust Knowledge of American Millennials and Gen Z Reveals Shocking Results" (<http://www.claimscon.org/millennial-study/>), the sub-heading reads, "*Disturbing Findings Reveal Significant Number Of Millennials and Gen Z Can't Name A Single Concentration Camp Or Ghetto, Believe That Two Million Or Fewer Jews Were Killed And A Concerning Percentage Believe That Jews Caused The Holocaust.*" Despite the alarming statistics, one of the important positive findings in this study was that Millennials and Gen Zers felt that education about the Holocaust is important. Ohio is a very disappointing 32nd in the U.S. in Holocaust knowledge, and this bill has the potential to improve our standing and to help our citizens understand the historical context and moral imperative to not let this happen again.

Thank you for your consideration to pass this important legislation out of your committee.