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December 7, 2020



The Ohio State Senate Finance Committee  
The Ohio State House  
1 Capitol Square  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Members of the Finance Committee:

On behalf of ADL (the Anti-Defamation League), I am pleased to offer this statement in support of Senate Bill 372, which would create the Holocaust and Genocide Memorial and Education Commission and make an appropriation to support its work.

ADL is a leading anti-hate organization. Founded in 1913 in response to an escalating climate of anti-Semitism and bigotry, ADL's mission is to protect the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment for all. Today, ADL continues to fight all forms of hate with the same vigor and passion. ADL is a global leader in exposing extremism and delivering anti-bias education. Our ultimate goal is a world in which no group or individual suffers from bias, discrimination or hate.

Over the years, ADL has developed unique expertise and insight regarding the importance of Holocaust and genocide education in K-12 schools. Since 2005, ADL, in partnership with the USC Shoah Foundation and Yad Vashem World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem, has trained more than 50,000 educators through the *Echoes & Reflections* Holocaust education program, which allows teachers to introduce students to the complex themes of the Holocaust and its impact on the world. In total, the program has reached an estimated 5.2 million students across the United States.

The need for Holocaust and genocide education in our schools could not be more urgent. According to one study, two thirds of American millennials do not know what Auschwitz is. ADL's data documents 2,107 antisemitic incidents across the country in 2019 alone—the highest number on record since ADL started tracking incidents in 1979. 411 of these incidents occurred in K-12 schools, representing a 19 percent increase in school-based incidents over 2018.

Ohio has an opportunity through this proposed Commission to promote education to address this hate. When students do not understand the history of the Holocaust and other genocides or the elements leading to these tragedies, they cannot fully grasp the significance of their own biased actions or the tremendous harm they can cause to an entire community because of the polarizing and intimidating impact of antisemitism and other forms of hate. Even small-scale interactions such as stereotyping classmates or casually drawing hate symbols on desks and on social media can have a lasting effect.

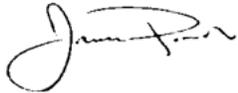
We believe that establishing and supporting the proposed Commission, which will “take inventory of current statewide Holocaust and genocide memorial and education programs and initiatives, and propose programming to fill program and initiative gaps,” is a timely and critically important step. The creation of an education office is equally important to ensure that the Commission’s goals are met, and we welcome the commitment reflected in the bill to implement these crucial standards by providing the necessary resources and supporting the necessary external relationships. Working with those with appropriate expertise is without question the most effective way “to promote and ensure the highest standards of Holocaust and genocide memorial and education.”

The proposed Ohio Holocaust and Genocide Memorial and Education Commission addresses a clear obligation for this state to empower a new generation to learn from our past to build a stronger and more tolerant society in the future. As we have seen during this global pandemic, hate and antisemitism do not rest. Education is a powerful way to confront this hate, and this proposed Commission affords Ohio a unique way to demonstrate welcome leadership in this area.

We urge your approval of Senate Bill 372 and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

James Pasch

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Pasch", with a stylized flourish at the end.

James Pasch  
Regional Director, ADL Cleveland