



We exist to ensure the lessons of the Holocaust inspire action today.

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Proponent Testimony in Support of SB 372:
Create Holocaust & Genocide Memorial & Education Commission

November 30, 2020

Dear Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, Ranking Member Sykes, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Nancy & David Wolf Holocaust & Humanity Center in Cincinnati, I am honored to express our fervent support of Senate Bill 372. We are grateful to Sen. Rulli and the 18 cosponsors of SB 372, the strong bipartisan support exemplifies its significance. As the only dedicated Holocaust museum in Ohio, our organization was founded by survivors who believed that “future generations” should learn from the lessons of the past. Today, we are privileged to share their stories along with many WWII veterans in our museum and numerous educational initiatives that reach audiences throughout Ohio and beyond.

While we are proud of our work, a recent [study](#) released by the Claims Conference revealed the appalling lack of Holocaust knowledge within Americans of all ages and backgrounds. Almost two-thirds of millennials and Gen Zers do not know that six million Jews were killed in the Holocaust, and almost half do not know the name of any concentration camp. This coupled with the current environment of widespread polarization, antisemitism, and hate-crime incidents, forces us to be concerned about whether we are honoring the hopes of the survivors. At the same time, we have seen rampant Holocaust trivialization and denial, including such concerning rhetoric from elected officials. Senate Bill 372 could help ensure that all Ohioans learn from one of the darkest chapters in human history.

I believe wholeheartedly that people want to learn from the past, to make necessary changes in the present, and to create a better future for our country and the world. High school students who learned about the Holocaust leave school with more empathy, pluralistic attitudes, and desire for civic engagement, according to a [survey](#) released by our partner at Echoes & Reflections. In fact, 80% of millennial respondents said they believe it is important to continue teaching about the Holocaust.

At HHC, we have the privilege to work with hundreds of educators and thousands of students, through tours of the museum, educator professional trainings, and programs, and we see firsthand the profound impact that Holocaust education can have on young Ohioans and the teachers who guide them. Senate Bill 372 could enhance that impact throughout the state.

Further, we have seen a proliferation of Holocaust denial and antisemitism on social media platforms and the internet causing young people in particular to question the validity of this watershed historic event. While the digital age has contributed to the spread of misinformation and denial, it has also allowed us to reach people throughout the state of Ohio. Currently, we are partnering with the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage, on a campaign called [Stop the Hate Ohio](#). Offering joint digital programming and workshops to reach thousands of Ohioans throughout the year.

Due to the pandemic, HHC now hosts its weekly Holocaust Speaker Series online – giving Holocaust survivors the platform to reach thousands digitally with their testimony. We are used to getting comments about how transformational these experiences are, but we have been surprised to see comments like, “I read things that said it didn’t happen, [after hearing the speaker] now I know the story.” Exposure to this history makes a difference and Senate Bill 372 would ensure that Ohioans have greater exposure to the Holocaust and its lessons.

When the survivors said, “Never Again,” they hoped that no one else would experience the horrors of genocide. Sadly, we know that genocides continued in the aftermath of the Holocaust and continue to this day. Let Senate 372 help ensure we live up to the phrase of “Never Again.”

I want to leave you with one story of Ohio’s connection to the Holocaust. My own grandparents, Leo and Genia Weiss survived the ghettos and camps and started life in America with the hope of a better future. My grandfather was a small business owner in Cleveland and my grandmother worked tirelessly at a bakery to make sure they would always have enough food, clothing, and warmth to raise my father. They survived, thrived, and gave back to their community. There are thousands of these stories throughout the state and it is our responsibility to ensure they are not lost to time.

As the only Holocaust museum in the state with more than 20 years of experience in Holocaust education, HHC stands ready to partner and support the Holocaust & Genocide Memorial & Education Commission.

Thank you for your consideration of this important Bill.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sarah L. Weiss".

Sarah L. Weiss, CEO
Nancy & David Wolf Holocaust & Humanity Center