

March 15, 2023

Dear Chairman and Committee Members:

On behalf of ADL (the Anti-Defamation League), the leading anti-hate organization, and our Midwest Regional Office, **we urge you and the committee to advance the recently introduced bill to require Holocaust and genocide education in social studies curriculum for middle and high school students (SF 2442/HF 2685)**. This bill would also create a Holocaust and Genocide Education Task Force. At a moment when targeted hate around the country is on the rise, it is tantamount that Minnesotan youth - and all students - understand the implications of the Holocaust. Though a different era, the lessons gleaned from Holocaust education are universal and evergreen; a testament to the deadly and devastating consequences of silence in the face of unchecked bigotry and targeted hate.

Founded in 1913 in response to escalating antisemitism and bigotry, ADL's mission is to protect the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment for all.

Over the years, ADL has developed unique expertise and insight on 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 thousands of educators through the *Echoes & Reflections* Holocaust education program. This module equips teachers with tools to effectively teach about the Holocaust, its complex themes, and global implications. To date, the program has reached an estimated 125,000 educators, and an estimated 12 million students across the United States.

We are grateful that Minnesota legislators are taking important steps to mandate Holocaust education in schools. The need for Holocaust and genocide education in K-12 schools could not be more urgent. In 2021 alone, ADL documented 331 antisemitic incidents in schools across the country. Many of these incidents involved the drawing of swastikas and the use of hateful language such as "Heil Hitler" and Holocaust-related messages.

These incidents did not take place in a vacuum. They come at a time of rising bigotry, the emboldening of hate groups, and a resurgence of Holocaust denialism—a challenge that has existed on the fringes for many years, but in recent years has encroached on the mainstream of our politics and discourse. They also come at a time when Holocaust and genocide awareness, particularly among young people, is fading from memory. According to one recent survey, for example, 22% of American millennials have either never heard of the Holocaust or are unsure whether they have heard of it. According to a 2020 [50-state survey](#), 35% of Minnesotan millennials and Gen Z respondents thought fewer than two million Jews died in the Holocaust.

These statistics are not a coincidence. When our students do not understand the history of genocide or its causes, they cannot fully grasp the significance of their actions or the tremendous harm they can cause to the school community. Education is therefore key to combating hate. By learning about the Holocaust and other genocides, students will better draw connections between stereotypes, prejudice, and religious/ethnic hatreds and the devastating consequences of hate left unchecked and unchallenged.

In mere years, the eyewitnesses to the Holocaust will no longer be with us to share their stories. This responsibility will shift to family members, institutions, educators and individuals who are committed to sharing narratives of long-gone survivors. The increase in Holocaust denial, at a time when Holocaust survivors are still alive, further necessitates the need for Holocaust and genocide education in Minnesota schools.

We urge the Committee to support the **Holocaust and genocide education mandate (SF 2442/HF 2685)** and are committed to working in tandem with the Committee and our partners to ensure that our youth, our future leaders, learn to never forget.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Goldenberg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

David Goldenberg

ADL Midwest Regional Director