

February 22, 2024

Dear Legislators,

I am writing to express strong support for Senate Bill 1058 and its counterpart, House Bill 1181. The bills' aim to introduce comprehensive anti-hate education and training, specifically mandating Holocaust education, in schools receiving public funds is a necessary step in stemming the rising tide of antisemitism in Maryland.

The urgency of including Holocaust education in all schools is emphasized by FBI Director Christopher Wray's statement in an October 2023 Senate hearing identifying "historic" levels of antisemitic hate crimes. While Jewish identity, religion, culture, and history are multifaceted and should not solely focus on the Holocaust, mandating its coverage in Maryland schools is a concrete step the General Assembly can take to combat antisemitism and promote tolerance, empathy, and understanding among residents, including Jews and Israeli-Americans.

A recent nationwide survey<sup>1</sup> revealed significant gaps in Americans' historical knowledge of the Holocaust. Shockingly, 63 percent of respondents were unaware that six million Jews were murdered during the Holocaust, with Maryland scoring among the states with the lowest level of knowledge.

One of the survey's most disturbing findings is that 11 percent of U.S. Millennial and Gen Z respondents believe Jews caused the Holocaust. Additionally, a troubling percentage of Millennials and Gen Z have encountered Holocaust denial or distortion on social media, with approximately half having seen such posts online.

Moreover, there is a striking correlation between Holocaust denial and denial of the October 7 attack on Jews by Hamas in Israel. A recent wave of misinformation about the Holocaust, the Jewish homeland, and the terror attack on October 7 are being used to rationalize attacks against Jews and undermine the legitimacy of the Jewish homeland. These alarming parallels underscore the need for comprehensive anti-hate education initiatives, including mandatory Holocaust education and training for students and teachers on antisemitism.

I urge you to champion these bills and oppose antisemitism, Holocaust denial, and terror denial. This is an opportunity to combat ignorance and hate against Jews and Israeli-Americans.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Millennial Holocaust Knowledge and Awareness Survey was conducted in 2020 by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference).

Sincerely,  
Laura Strashny  
Montgomery County, Maryland resident  
District 19  
Member of newly-formed Maryland Jewish Alliance (MJA)