

Dear Senators,

Hello, my name is Robert Hadley and I have been an educator for over 20 years in Oregon and now working to build up a teacher core among the Yup'ik people in Western Alaska. I write to you today in reference to Senate Bill 664 regarding the mandating of Holocaust and genocide education in our state. I was the first Oregonian to be awarded the prestigious Museum Teacher Fellowship at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum back in 2001 and have remained active as a Holocaust educator ever since. I taught a Holocaust and genocide studies class at Clackamas High School for years, conducted trainings for teachers throughout the country as well as working for the USC Shoah Foundation training teachers to use testimony in the classroom.

I stand in support of a mandate for Holocaust education for many reasons. First and foremost because it is abundantly clear the need for students to know and understand this history. Sadly, recent events in Charlottesville, The Tree of Life Synagogue shooting and other acts of Antisemitism have only amplified the need for the next generation to better understand the consequences of hate. Recent surveys conducted show that as Holocaust survivors like Al Wiener and Miriam Greenstein (Oregonians) pass away our collective knowledge of these events fade from view. We fail to honor the legacy they left us by allowing their stories to end up in the dustbin of history.

For me, teaching this history was always the most effective way for my students to engage in critical thinking on a range of topics that truly mattered to them. It was the one topic that students engaged in independent conversation with each other outside of the school day, truly internalizing the learning and applying it in new and meaningful ways. Clearly remembering the past and honoring those who survived it is another key reason to ensure this history doesn't just become a forgotten lesson once taught when guest speaking survivors could share their stories in person. We have an obligation to act as witnesses for them and with the tools we have, we can and must continue in that effort.

What I want to ensure is fully understood by this committee however is that simply passing a mandate isn't enough. As written, SB 664 fails to include provisions to ensure that effective training is offered to teachers and/or that districts have shown effective implementation of best practices into their curriculum. While it isn't usually the place of this committee to dictate curriculum on such a micro level, I do think that ensuring that districts use fidelity in ensuring that this history be taught WELL is important. We don't need to reinvent the wheel (nor does any district in its implementation) as states like New Jersey, Ohio, Florida and others have led the way. The USHMM, Facing History, The Memorial Library, The Museum of Tolerance and our own Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education also stand ready to work with teachers to help ensure high quality professional development is offered to teachers.

Please consider this bill with amendments for passage. I would be happy to help this committee in any way I can as this bill works through the legislative process. Thank you for taking the time to listen.

Robert Hadley
The Olga Lengyel Institute Oregon Co-Director
Museum Teacher Fellow, 2001