

Thank you for the opportunity and the honor to address the Senate Education Committee in support of HB 4493.

My name is Corey Harbaugh and I am Director of Teaching and Learning at Fennville Public Schools, a small, rural district in western Allegan County. I also represent the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum as both a teacher fellow and a member of the Regional Educator Corps; there are two of us in Michigan and approximately forty across the country, and our role for the Museum is to provide teacher education and classroom-centered expertise on Holocaust education that is powerful, yet historically accurate and professionally responsible.

I also represent the USC Shoah Foundation as a Master Teacher; this is the Los Angeles-based organization created by Steven Spielberg after the filming of *Schindler's List*, and there are perhaps sixty master teachers in the United State; at this time I am not aware of others in Michigan. My role in that organization is to create and consider education based on eyewitness testimony, the experience and stories shared by survivors, liberators, and others who witnessed the Holocaust firsthand. This work becomes increasingly critical as the number of eyewitnesses to the Holocaust grows smaller every day.

And finally I represent the Memorial Library of New York City as co-director of a week-long seminar every summer for teachers at Michigan's Holocaust Memorial Center, the Zekelman Family Campus in Farmington Hills. Over the past five years we have worked with nearly 100 teachers from literally every corner of Michigan, from Berrien County to the tip of the mitten, from Detroit to the Keweenaw Peninsula, looking at and sharing strategies for teaching the Holocaust in Michigan schools.

I support this bill and the effort to make Michigan the seventh state in the nation to require Holocaust and genocide education. I believe in passing it we make a big statement about the place of human history in our curriculum, even as our schools work to rise to the challenge of STEM education, robotics, early childhood education, and other initiatives.

I believe in passing this bill we are also making an important statement about Michigan, about education in Michigan, what we value and who we are. I'll illustrate this with a brief story.

In 2009 I was doing research on Holocaust education and came upon a rich resource for teachers about German propaganda during the Nazi regime. As I looked at the resource I wondered where it was from, and given the scholarship figured it was part of the archives at the national Museum in Washington DC, or Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, and I discovered, much to my surprise, that the archive was the work of a Michigan scholar, Dr. Randall Bytwerk at Calvin College in Grand Rapids. That got me thinking that there must be other Holocaust education scholars, teachers, and resources here in Michigan, and of course I found there are.

At our colleges and universities, and in schools across Michigan, we have incredible expertise to call upon when this bill becomes law. We have a world-class Holocaust museum and outreach facility at the Zekelman Family Campus that can serve as the home of Holocaust education, and the center of a state-wide network of expertise. We have partners and leaders in industry and philanthropy who are ready

and willing to support the effort for Michigan to make this commitment to the important place of humanity in K-12 education.

One of the most important lessons that I have learned is that Holocaust education can and must meet local needs, and this bill provides for local relevance. It can be a very different thing to teach about the Holocaust in a community like Fennville, which is 50% Latino, than it is to teach about the Holocaust in a white-majority community, at a religious schools, or at one of the communities in our state with a large Native American population, or African American population, or in a place like Dearborn with a large population of American Muslims.

I am often asked *why the Holocaust*; what makes the Holocaust so important to study when there were genocidal events that took place both before the Holocaust and since. I expect the members of this committee will be asked many of those same questions. I answer that question pedagogically, meaning, I answer that question in the way it makes sense to me as an educator. The Holocaust exists in the right place for teachers and students to approach it as a complex and dynamic historical event, from multiple perspectives, and with a huge, established body of research and documentation behind it that continues to grow to this day. As long as people study the creation of what we call the modern world, the Holocaust will exist in the dark center of that study, allowing for clear connections to all the genocidal events that happened before, during, or after. A study of the Holocaust does not preclude a study or understanding of other genocides; rather, it creates an intellectual framework that allows for and very often leads to a study of other occasions of violence, hatred, and injustice. The arc of inquiry in Holocaust education always leads to more questions, not easy answers, and questions lead to critical thinking. As *Facing History and Ourselves* so rightly states it in their slogan: People Make Choices, and Choices Make History. Holocaust education is critical thinking about choices that became history.

If this bill becomes law, there will, of course, be an effort made by schools to incorporate it. But it has to be done carefully, and well, and not in a rush. In my work I have encountered a fair amount of what I would call "bad Holocaust education." The Holocaust can be taught in a way that is sensational, even traumatic, that does more damage than good. That happens, for instance, when a teacher shows photos from concentration camps to young students who experience those images as trauma, or when a teacher narrates the Holocaust like it was a horror story with Hitler as the monster, rather than as a complex history, or when teachers present inaccurate history or Holocaust as a fable, like it is portrayed in several popular films. This bill cannot be allowed to lead to "bad" Holocaust education that is done quickly, without support, without structure or resources or training for teachers who will want to teach the Holocaust and other genocides well.

As you consider this bill and as you move it forward, please be sure to continue to provide for the kind of deliberation and planning for support that will happen with the creation of a 15-member task force dedicated to planning for and providing support to teachers across the state. With the right supports in place, this bill can have the impact the authors intend, and outcomes in the classroom that change students, classrooms, communities, and lives. Michigan is ready for the challenge and opportunity this law would present for K-12 education, and we're ready to make this kind of statement about who we are and what we value.