

Senate Bill 833

Public Testimony
Senate Committee on Education
January 17, 2024

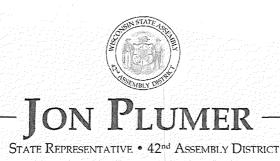
Thank you, Chairman Jagler and members of the committee, for holding this hearing on Senate Bill 833.

We are here today to provide crucial funding for the Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center (HERC) in Whitefish Bay. HERC is the primary support vehicle for implementing 2021 Act 30, which mandates Holocaust education in public, charter, and choice schools. HERC's services include field trips, in-class programs, speakers, lesson plans, and workshops for educators. Last year alone, HERC's programming impacted nearly 100,000 students in over 300 school districts, and these services are offered at no cost to schools. Individuals are here today to testify on behalf of HERC, and they can speak to the impact it has had on students throughout the state.

The importance of Holocaust education has never been greater, as we have seen a tragic surge in anti-Semitic sentiment in recent months. Since the barbaric terrorist attack on Israel by the terrorist group Hamas on October 7th, anti-Semitic incidents have increased by 360% over the prior year. These incidents include threats, slurs, vandalism, and assault. At the same time, the public's memory of the worst genocide in history is fading. HERC and Act 30 play a key role in preserving memory of the Holocaust and ensuring it never happens again.

While we initially drafted the bill to reflect HERC's projected needs earlier in the year, the increased demand for their services as well as unforeseen security needs resulting from the explosion in anti-Semitic threats have placed further stress on their budget. As a result, we are amending the bill to increase the grant to \$200,000 annually.

I am happy to report that this bill has broad bipartisan support in both houses. Thank you for your time, and we would be happy to answer any of your questions.



Senate Committee on Education January 17, 2024

Testimony Supporting SB 833

Good Morning Chairman Jagler and Committee members. Thank you for holding a hearing and offering me the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 833, which provides additional funding for Holocaust education resources for schools across Wisconsin. As drafted, the bill provides \$100,000 each year over the biennium. An amendment we drafted doubles that amount to \$200,000.

We've seen a surge in anti-Semitic incidents in recent months, including the Hamas attacks against Jewish citizens in Israel on October 7th. Holocaust education is more important than ever to ensure current and future generations understand the devastating consequences of anti-Semitism and intolerance.

This bill, if amended, would provide a \$200,000 annual grant over the biennium to the Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center (HERC) so they can continue providing educational programs that support 2021 Act 30. As the author of Act 30, I co-authored SB 833 to serve as a follow-up bill to help fund the mandated Holocaust education in public, charter, and choice schools. HERC is the primary support vehicle for educators in Wisconsin in carrying out this requirement.

HERC is working to increase the support services offered as a result of Act 30, which includes bringing on additional education staff handling school requests, support for the Holocaust Education Map toolkit, and developing curriculum.

Last year, HERC's programs impacted nearly 100,000 students in more than 300 district around the state. This included field trips, in-class programs, speakers, lesson plans, and workshops for educators.

Thank you again for hearing this legislation.

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Senate & Assembly Committees on Education Public Hearing on AB919/SB833

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Senate & Assembly Committees on Education Public Hearing on AB919/SB833

Wednesday, January 17, 2024 Wisconsin State Capitol 2 E Main Street – Madison, WI

Introduction: Samantha Abramson (Executive Director, HERC)

500 W Bradley Rd Fox Point, WI 53217

Senate District 8: Dan Knodl

Assembly District 23: Deb Andraca samanthaa@milwaukeejewish.org

414-803-0513

Speaker #1: Lindsay McBride (Social Studies Teacher)

Ozaukee School District 401 Highland Drive Fredonia, WI 53201

Senate District 20: Duey Stroebel Assembly District 60: Robert Brooks

Imcbride@nosd.edu 262-692-2463 ext. 337

Speaker #2: Eva Zaret (Holocaust Survivor)

8951 N Fielding Rd Milwaukee, WI 53217

Senate District 8: Dan Knodl

Assembly District 23: Deb Andraca

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Speaker #3: Nancy Kennedy Barnett (Child of Survivor)

7936 N Fairchild Rd Milwaukee, WI 53217

Senate District 8: Dan Knodl

Assembly District 23: Deb Andraca

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LEADING THE NATION IN

HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

Wisconsin ranks highest in the country for its Holocaust knowledge score among millennials and Gen Z*-testimony to the profound influence HERC has made across the state.

HERC's expertise and resources make the difference between a checkmark – completing required curriculum as part of Wisconsin Act 30 – and a paramount, perspective-changing life experience for potentially more than 600,000 students across the state.

*2020 Claims Conference Survey



HERC is the only organization in Wisconsin dedicated solely to Holocaust education. As a trusted resource for decades, we are committed to Holocaust education as a means to bring about societal change through the study of the social, economic and political factors that led to the genocide of six million Jews and millions of non-Jews during World War II. Supporting educators across the state, HERC provides public programming and educational experiences for learners of all ages.

HERC'S IMPACT FROM 2022-2023

117

FREE LESSON PLANS

on the Holocaust Education Map website

336

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

reached

775

EDUCATORS

trained through workshops

3,861

STUDENTS

attended field trips or in-class programs

9,478

STUDENTS

engaged with HERC's Speakers Bureau

· 135,625

STUDENTS

impacted

21,000

USERS

on the Holocaust Education Map website

6,105

BOOKS

distributed to Wisconsin schools

<u> 211.720</u>

IMPACTS

through HERC's digital content

Visit HERC's Holocaust Education Map





TRANSFORMING PERSPECTIVES

75% of students participating in HERC programs say that the experience inspired them to:



Think about the way they treat others



CREATING A LASTING CONNECTION

Damien, a 6th grader born in Venezuela, listened intently to Holocaust survivor Edie Pump during a HERC program. Like Damien, Edie was eleven-years-old when she entered the U.S. as a refugee -- not yet knowing how to speak English and how to adjust to a new home.

Edie didn't let herself fall, she kept moving forward. And for that, she is my inspiration.

INSPIRING ACTION

"I learned how prejudice and bias can lead to horrible atrocities if prejudice is given enough power."

WHITNALL SCHOOL DISTRICT STUDENT

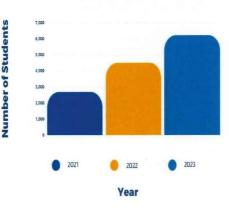
"One lesson I learned from my study of the Holocaust is how bad things can happen if no one is brave enough to stand up and try to prevent it."

SWALLOW MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT

"Our teachers are better equipped to teach the Holocaust because of this tool [Holocaust Education Map] and our students' educational experience is better for it."

BRUCE - ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

Speakers Bureau Engagement



EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS & RESOURCES

- Speakers Bureau: Holocaust survivors and their families share their Holocaust testimonies in schools across Wisconsin.
- In-Class Programs: HERC educators lead classroom lessons and discussions to address challenging topics on the Holocaust.
- **Educator Workshops:** Professional development workshops for Wisconsin educators ensure they are prepared to teach on the Holocaust.
- **Holocaust Education Map:** The free one-stop toolkit helps build reliable, respectful and rigorous lessons on the Holocaust, with more than 117 lesson plans, searchable by grade, class duration, and state social studies standard.
- One-on-One Educator Consultations: HERC staff provides guidance on teaching about the Holocaust, reviewing lessons, and troubleshooting challenges.
- **Community Engagement:** Year-round, thought-provoking programming for families and adults through literature, film, music, discussion, and more.
- Addressing Contemporary Antisemitism: HERC staff responds to reported antisemitic incidents to educate and support students, teachers, and schools.



TO: Assembly Committee on Education and Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Samantha Abramson, Executive Director, Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center:

RE: Support for Assembly Bill 919/Senate Bill 833

Dear esteemed members of the Assembly/Senate Education Committee,

My name is Samantha Abramson, born and raised in Wisconsin and the Executive Director of the Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center, best known as HERC. Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify before you today in strong support of Assembly Bill 919/Senate Bill 833, which would provide \$100,000 to support HERC's efforts. Thank you to Senators Dan Knodl and Cory Tomczyk and Representatives Jon Plumer and John Spiros for authoring this important bill, and to the many cosponsors.

In case you were not aware, Wisconsin consistently ranks highest in the nation in Holocaust awareness as reported by the Claims Conference, and HERC is THE ONLY organization in our state solely dedicated to Holocaust education.

History was made three years ago when the Wisconsin State Legislature voted *unanimously*, following compelling testimony by Holocaust survivors, students, educators, volunteers, and content experts, to pass legislation mandating education on the Holocaust and other genocides in every Wisconsin middle and high school. At a time of rising antisemitism and deep division, you as lawmakers and we as the people of Wisconsin came together in a bipartisan effort, led by former Senator Alberta Darling and Representatives Jon Plumer and Lisa Subeck, to affirm our commitment to Holocaust education. We recognized how essential these lessons are in shaping the next generation of leaders, so that we can all say "never again" to all forms of hatred, discrimination, persecution, and genocide in our lifetime.

With the passage of 2021 Wisconsin Act 30, HERC promised to provide resources and lesson plans for all Wisconsin classrooms, at no cost to Wisconsin taxpayers or schools. In the first years of Act 30, HERC has delivered on this promise tenfold:

- We launched our innovative Holocaust Education Map, TeachHolocaust.org, a free
 toolkit for educators that continues to expand and currently includes 117 complete
 lesson plans, sortable by Wisconsin state social studies standard, grade level, class
 duration, theme, and topic. This platform has positioned Wisconsin as a leader in the
 Holocaust education space, as no other state has such a resource.
- Our education staff has travelled across the state to all twelve Cooperative
 Educational Service Agencies with encouragement from the Wisconsin Department
 of Public Instruction, to offer two-day workshops for Wisconsin educators to learn
 not only about the Holocaust, but the pedagogy for teaching this challenging content in a
 respectful, responsible, and effective way, with local stories and connections when
 possible. HERC has trained 775 educators since these workshops began in 2021,
 impacting over 135,000 Wisconsin students.

- The reach of our speakers bureau of Holocaust survivors and educators has tripled in scope since 2021, with our phones ringing off the hook every spring as middle and high school teachers arrive at their World War II units. Noticing that demand was quickly picking up, HERC recruited and trained over a dozen new speakers, including children and grandchildren of survivors, to carry on their parents' and grandparents' stories.
- To accomplish all of this, over the course of two years **HERC hired and grew its staff** from 4 to 7 full-time staff, including two additional education positions. We did this with funding from individuals and foundations, who contribute the majority of our revenue.
- Over the next fiscal year, HERC's projected annual operating budget is projected to grow from \$450K in 2021 to \$850K in 2024, due to supportive services undertaken by HERC in service to our state's student's and educators. Increased expenses include professional development workshops, expansion of our speakers bureau, ongoing maintenance of our high-quality educational materials, and continued outreach to educators through newly formed Teacher Advisory Groups and regional fellowships.

With antisemitism and other forms of identity-based hate on the rise once again, our trainings, lessons, and materials are in higher demand than ever before. Between 2015 and 2022 alone, reported antisemitic incidents in Wisconsin grew an astounding 494%, and when the data is published for 2023 we know there will be an even more dramatic increase. Most concerning to many of us is the fact that the fastest growing rate of antisemitic incidents are taking place in K-12 settings and on college campuses, as we've unfortunately seen in many recent local and national news stories. HERC is regularly called upon by schools across the state to help lead educational programs and provide resources when these incidents take place, to show students and teachers the dangers unchecked antisemitism and hatred poses to society, as only our survivors and education staff can.

Three years since the passing of the Holocaust education requirement, HERC is more committed than ever before to maintaining and expanding Wisconsin's leadership in Holocaust education. But we cannot do it alone. We are here today asking for your support in reaffirming our state's commitment to Holocaust education, during a pivotal time when teaching our students the dangers of antisemitism and hate matters most. Now is the time to invest in our collective future to keep Wisconsin moving FORWARD.

Please support Assembly Bill 919/Senate Bill 833.

Thank you so much for your leadership and time. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.



TO: Assembly Committee on Education and Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Lindsay McBride (**Social Studies Teacher**)
Ozaukee School District, 401 Highland Drive, Fredonia, WI 53201
Imcbride@nosd.edu, 262-692-2463 ext. 337

RE: Support for Assembly Bill 919/Senate Bill 833

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of Assembly Bill 919/Senate Bill 833, which would provide state funding to the Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center (HERC) to support the state's Holocaust education requirement for Wisconsin students.

My name is Lindsay McBride and I am a middle school social studies teacher at the Northern Ozaukee School District. Thank you for the opportunity to share the incredible difference that HERC has made in the lives of my students as well as the support they have provided me as a teacher. Teaching the Holocaust can be a daunting task, so when I added the subject to the 8th grade curriculum I knew how important it was to find an organization that could help. I have had the privilege of working closely with HERC for 10 years and wanted to explain the impact that they have had on me and my students.

Our goal as educators is to foster actively engaged citizens who will contribute positively to their communities. The only way for students to find the confidence and passion for this is to see a direct correlation between their learning, and the relevance it has on their lives. HERC allowed my students to do just that when we came to Madison to advocate for 2021 Wisconsin Act 30. Those opportunities like these show students their voices matter and that they have a stake in their future. Through this process, they wrote advocacy letters, discussed the importance of Holocaust education, saw firsthand how state government works, and met with a survivor. I still hear about how impactful this experience was from the students.

When I first heard about HERC, I was eager to connect with them because I knew that it was important for students to hear directly from expert historians and authors to Holocaust survivors and their families. It is the most powerful primary source available and has helped my students see beyond the statistics of 6 million Jews murdered and millions of others. For survivors and their families, it can be difficult to drive to a school that is far away, and it takes an emotional toll. HERC supports to help them keep speaking. Schools do not have enough funding to pay for guest speakers, so I am incredibly grateful to HERC's support in balancing the needs of the survivors with the inflexibility of a school. Throughout the 10 years that they have connected me with speakers, HERC has driven them to Ozaukee County, rearranged our speaking dates when necessary, introduced the speakers, and facilitated question and answer sessions.

With 85 and older being the average age of the Holocaust survivors today, the reality is that our time is limited to hear their stories and ensure that their history can continue through the people they tell their stories to. I am grateful that I have been able to give this gift to my students because of HERC and the relationships they have with Holocaust survivors in our state.

I think my middle school students can better speak to this impact, so I would like to read you a few quotes from letters my students sent to Howard Melton, a survivor who connected with my students and I in my classroom for many years.

 One student said, "I was really moved by your unique high perseverance and determination to live and your bright, open, loving and motivating spirit and story. Before I met you I had so much hate for the people who've hurt me in the past and I had such rage and negative energy.

- Since I met you sir it started slowly going away and I have had ten times the amount of hope that I had before so I honestly can never thank you enough."
- Another student said, "Howard, what can I say. You are the man. Thank you. Your story is inspiring, and as a 14-year-old young man, I admire your humbleness and hopefulness. No matter how successful I become, your words of "everyone is just a human being" will stick with me forever."
- Another student said, "Your story is one that must be heard. It is because of leaders like you that awareness is spread and change will come. You've taught me to not wait for change, but to be the change."

Since I began my work with HERC, Ozaukee Middle School students have met seven Holocaust survivors and their families. As I said before, our time is limited with these survivors and this was proven when we lost Howard in 2020. To commemorate him, our school made a bench to ensure his legacy lives on. HERC helped us plan a ceremony for the dedication of the bench, spoke at the event, and helped bring Howard's family to our school so they could see personally the impact that he had on our students.

HERC staff have also led restorative conversations with my students after antisemitic incidents that have occurred in our school. When difficult situations occur and I am teaching difficult history, I am always looking for guidance from experts in the field. HERC helps me to navigate this as well as provides me with lesson plans and educational materials which help to enhance my student's learning experiences such as free books to read, videos to watch, and field trips. They lead teacher committees and conferences so that educators across the state can share ideas, grapple with modern antisemitism in our schools, and help us adapt our teaching practices.

I hope through this testimony you can see that the resources, support, and opportunities HERC has provided to educators like me to enhance my ability to educate and inspire Wisconsin students through the lessons of the Holocaust. I support this funding bill because I want all schools to have access to HERC's tremendous resources.

TO: Assembly Committee on Education and Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Eva Zaret (Holocaust Survivor)

8951 N. Fielding Rd., Milwaukee, WI 53217 havazaret@gmail.com, 414-352-5995

RE: Support for Assembly Bill 919/Senate Bill 833

Hello. My name is Eva Zaret. Thank you so much for this important hearing.

I came to this beautiful country in the 1950s and have lived the American Dream; however, my life was not always this way. I was born in Budapest, Hungary in 1936. In 1944, at the age of 8, my family and I were forced into the Budapest Ghetto by the Nazis and their collaborators simply because we were Jewish. Until our liberation in 1945, I experienced things that no one should go through, much less a child!

As a Holocaust survivor, I can tell you that this history and the lessons it holds are now more important than ever. This is why, as a member of HERC's Speakers Bureau, I speak to thousands of students every year about my experiences during the Holocaust. It is only through Holocaust education that we can inspire the students of today to live peaceful lives and to love their fellow human beings. This is especially important today with the rise of antisemitism and prejudice.

I travel all over our beautiful state telling my story to students because antisemitism and hatred did not end with the Holocaust. That's why we must talk about it and inspire love and kindness.

When I tell the story of how I went through hell, I see students crying and afterwards they stand in line to take photos with me and give me hugs. I know that they're grateful to hear my story, and I see the impact on them.

The Holocaust is something that must never be forgotten. It pains me to think that the Jewish people could be victims of another Holocaust. This is why the Holocaust education that HERC provides is so important.



HERC hosts teacher training opportunities that provides the education, tools and resources necessary for Wisconsin teachers to enter the classroom prepared to teach the difficult topics related to the Holocaust. We need to teach our teachers how to educate their students respectfully, responsibly, and equipped with the facts. The money this bill provides will help fund this training.

When holocaust and other genocides are taught, it can be used as a lens to illustrate what can happen when hatred and bullying is left unchecked. Holocaust education not only teaches the history of one of the most violent periods in all mankind, it teaches an understanding of the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping, and an examination of what it means to be a responsible and respectful person today. We must teach acceptance of diversity in our society and how to nurture and protect democratic values and institutions. The dehumanization at the center still exists today!

AB 919/SB 833, will ensure that Wisconsin educators and schools have the resources to teach a painful part of humanity's past while preparing citizens to live respectfully today. When we engage with facts, the facts will lead the students to a different place and our world will be a better place. As Wisconsin's only organization dedicated to teaching about the Holocaust, HERC is uniquely qualified to ensure our state continues to be a leader in Holocaust education.

Please support this important piece of legislation.

Thank you very much. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.



TO: Assembly Committee on Education and Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Nancy Kennedy Barnett (**Child of Survivor**) 7936 N Fairchild Rd, Milwaukee, WI 53217 nkbarnett@gmail.com, 414-852-4848

RE: Support for Assembly Bill 919/Senate Bill 833

Good Morning and thank you for this opportunity to testify in strong support of Assembly Bill 919/Senate Bill 833, which would provide much needed resources to the Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center (HERC).

My name is Nancy Kennedy Barnett and I live in Fox Point, WI. I am an active community volunteer and leader, and a child of Holocaust survivor. I am a second-generation speaker telling my father's story of survival and I am a HERC board member.

I go out into the community, as mandated by law in Wisconsin since 2021, teaching about the atrocities of World War II, using materials and support provided by HERC.

I am here to ask you to pass AB919/SB833 in support of funding for HERC to continue serving our state's students and educators. I want to tell you about an interaction with a student that transpired when I was asked to speak to 130 8th grade students at North Shore Middle School in Hartland and what education can do to change the minds of these developing students and burgeoning citizens.

These students had traveled to the Illinois Holocaust Museum in Skokie, Illinois the day before on a HERC-led trip. After I had spent an hour with them, telling my father's story, during the question-and-answer time, an 8th grade girl raised her hand and clearly troubled, said to me, 'so...I was talking to my mom last night, and my mom says that she has a friend that says the Holocaust never happened...but should have!'

Clearly, this student, now equipped with the facts from the field trip and my presentation, was questioning the information received from her mother the night before. She had not been taught the truth before this week. And she wanted to know! We **must** teach the truth! As the decision makers of tomorrow, students must understand the consequences of indifference and hate. They must not be bystanders, they can be an upstander instead by being someone who gets involved; they can be proactive and have the courage to speak up and care. Teaching about the Holocaust using textbooks is not enough; students need to have the opportunity to connect with those impacted by genocide and ask their questions.

There are fewer and fewer people who can directly speak to what they experienced during the Holocaust as survivors and liberators of camps. HERC's speakers bureau of survivors and descendants like me is a key resource for our state's students and educators to learn these firsthand accounts. Over the few years HERC has worked diligently to capture stories on camera and to train the children and grandchildren of survivors on how to document and share their family stories.

TO: Assembly Committee on Education and Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Pardeep S. Kaleka Sikh Community of Wisconsin

RE: Support for Assembly Bill 819/Senate Bill 833

My name is Pardeep Singh Kaleka, a leader from the Sikh Community of Wisconsin. I have spent the vast majority of my life in public service and in engaging in anti-hate advocacy work across sectors and stakeholders. Over those years, I have formerly served as the executive director of the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee, which is an organization that serves to gather and convene the voices of many of our mainline faith communities across the southeastern Wisconsin, including Christian, Muslim, Jew, Sikh, Buddhist, Hindu leaders and many more. We fundamentally believe that our collective faiths call on us to bring about a world where the dignity of everyone is nurtured, respected, and fought for by leaning into our common divinity.

The Sikh Community continuously supports the efforts of the Holocaust Education Resource Center (HERC) in providing the much-needed resources and support for Wisconsin classrooms to learn about the Jewish Holocaust and the impact that this history still has on our modern-day society. The Sikh Community believes that "never again" starts with education and is further reenforced by our collective commitment towards healing and the betterment of society. In 2020, we encouraged the passing of Act 30 at the Wisconsin Senate and since then have worked side by side with amazing Jewish organizers and organizations, such as the Jewish Federation, JCRCs, HERC, and the Jewish Museum. We remain concerned about the rise in antisemitism and call on all elected leaders and communities to remain vigilant against all forms of hate, racism, bigotry and violence.

We are requesting that the state fund Act 30 and help middle and high schoolers throughout the state of Wisconsin learn about the history of the Holocaust and other genocides and its modern-day impact.

Grateful,

Pardeep S. Kaleka Sikh Community of Wisconsin 414-364-6263



College of Letters & Science

Sam and Helen Stahl Center for Jewish Studies

3367 N. Downer Ave. P.O. Box 413 Milwaukee, WI 53201-0413 414 229-6121 phone 414 229-5499 fax

January 12, 2024

Dear Representatives of the Wisconsin Assembly & Senate:

I am writing in support of state funding for the Nathan & Esther Pelz Holocaust Resource Center (HERC), which provides invaluable Holocaust education for the state of Wisconsin.

I have been teaching the Holocaust at UWM for almost thirty years and have been involved with HERC in a variety of ways during that time, including as a board member and speaker. I have seen first-hand the impact of HERC and its skilled staff on teachers, students, and community members; I support HERC and its mission without reservation.

Teaching at the college level, I see the importance of educating students about the Holocaust in middleand high school. My students often talk to me about the Holocaust education they received before coming to my class, and their experiences vary widely. The students who are most connected to the subject often tell me they had a survivor visit their school, thanks to HERC.

Today, as Holocaust survivors pass away, that experience is becoming rarer. In the absence of survivors, quality Holocaust education is even more important. The Holocaust is a topic that can be overwhelming for teachers, as there are many dates, events, and details and it can be difficult to discern which are the most essential. Teachers cannot be expected to get an advanced degree in Holocaust Studies; what they need is professional development that focuses on the needs of teachers.

HERC fills an essential role, by empowering teachers to fulfill Wisconsin's Holocaust mandate with confidence. HERC has created the Holocaust Educational Map at www.teachholocaust.org, which helps teachers develop meaningful lesson plans. HERC staff travel across the state to work with teachers, providing engaging and meaningful professional development opportunities.

Holocaust & genocide education is especially important now, as antisemitism and hate crimes increase. At UW-Milwaukee, courses on the Holocaust fill to capacity every semester. Students are eager to know about this dark time in human history and to use their education to become better citizens. Wisconsin legislators saw the importance of this subject in mandating Holocaust & genocide education. Now I implore this distinguished body to further support Holocaust education with state funding for HERC so that HERC might extend its reach and impact across our state.

Sincerely yours,

Rachel N. Baum, Ph.D.

Jackel N. Barn

Deputy Director, Sam & Helen Stahl Center for Jewish Studies



Statement in Support of Assembly Bill 919/Senate Bill 833

Thank you for the honor of submitting statement to the Assembly Committee on Education and Senate Committee on Education. On behalf of the Superintendent of Schools of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and our 101 schools, I would like to state our strong support for the passage of Assembly Bill 919/Senate Bill 833 to provide funding to the Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center to bolster their mission to provide support to all schools in the State of Wisconsin in meeting the requirements of Wisconsin 2021 Act 30.

The Holocaust, or Shoah, is a seminal event in the history of mankind. More than six million men, women, and children were intentionally, systematically, and ruthlessly exterminated for the singular reason that they were Jewish. Millions of others were also put to death. While we cannot change what happened, we must acknowledge that the Holocaust was not an inevitable event. Through a thorough and comprehensive study of the Holocaust and other genocides of history, we can learn valuable lessons and insights applicable to contemporary times that must be passed on to today's students...our leaders of tomorrow...so that history does not repeat itself. So that groups of people are not targeted for death due to their race, ethnicity, or religion.

We believe in the necessity of Holocaust education, in our schools taught with a recognition and understanding of the history of our Church, taught through the lens of the Catholic worldview, and taught in accord to the principle of solidarity that "highlights in a particular way the intrinsic social nature of the human person, the equality of all in dignity and rights and the common path of individuals and peoples towards an ever more committed unity." (Pontifical Council on Justice and Peace, Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (2005), No. 192)

We enjoy a genuine, growing partnership with the Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center that allows our schools direct access to reliable, authentic instructional resources. We further partner with HERC to provide direct teacher training. We look forward to our continued journey together on this shared mission.

In closing, please let me reiterate: just as we support the requirements of Wisconsin 2017 Act 143 for all schools, the Superintendent of Schools of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee supports requiring Holocaust education in all schools in the State of Wisconsin.

Thank you,

Bruce Varick Associate Superintendent 17 January 2024

Student and Educator Testimonies

Student statements (after hearing a HERC Speakers Bureau member [Holocaust survivors and their family members])

"Thank you for coming to our school to talk about your family's experience with the Holocaust. It made me think about what situations I might have come out of and the generations of ancestors that came before me. It was really cool to hear your personal experience and not just read books or watch documentaries like we normally do."

-Addi, Savanna Oaks Middle School, Verona Area School District, Dane County

"I really enjoyed learning about your dad's story. I thought it was very interesting that he was running from the Nazis. After your story, I will try to get better at not making fun of someone."

-Clay, Waunakee Intermediate School, Waunakee Community School District, Dane County

"I was so moved by your presentation and I just really want to thank you for taking time out of your day to explain to us your father's personal story. I think when people are learning about an event that is only spoken through words it's hard for it to stick with them, but the way that you explain your story to us wasn't just spoken with words, but also with emotion. I could tell that it was a sincere story that you told from the bottom of your heart. And I think your story will stick with me for a very long time."

-Piper, JC McKenna Middle School, Evansville Community School District, Rock County

"You motivated me to never give up. If you, someone who's been through so much in the Holocaust never gave up, then I shouldn't either."

-Andrea, Vieau School, Milwaukee Public Schools, Milwaukee County

"This story could make us act and maybe fix some of the things that are happening like this."

-Kayla, Whitehorse Middle School, Madison Metropolitan School District, Dane County

"Thank you so much for sharing your story with me. It enlightened me and really opened my eyes to the truth of the Holocaust and the injustices of discrimination."

-Mathew, Holy Family Parish School, Whitefish Bay, Milwaukee County

"I realize that you may be the only Holocaust survivor I will ever meet and that this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I hope you will keep speaking to people of all age groups and informing them of what really happened in the Holocaust and I will also tell my children about this tragic event so we never forget what happened."

-Jaden, New Glarus Middle School, New Glarus School District, Green County

Student statements (from other programs – workshops, field trips)

"I am so glad that you were able to come in and talk to us. It takes a lot to be able to explain this topic well. I think that there are many kids (in our school) who don't know much about the Holocaust, don't know the true/full story, and/or don't understand the meanings behind it and how offensive some things could be. I am so glad that you came in and explained it in such a great way. I think some people really needed to hear what you had to say (and more in the future)."

-Kennedy, Ozaukee Middle School, Northern Ozaukee School District, Ozaukee County

"It was truly an amazing experience to be part of the creation of this bill. It helped me solidify the knowledge that through continuous education the tragedy of the Holocaust will be taught to and hopefully remembered by students coming up through the Wisconsin school system."

-Regan, Milwaukee School of Languages, Milwaukee Public Schools, Milwaukee County

"Educating each successive generation about the divisiveness, prejudice, and injustice that led to the evils of the Holocaust is needed to ensure that such an atrocity will never happen again. We share survivors' deeply personal stories so that others can learn from and be moved by their first-hand accounts. Holocaust education provides a voice for those murdered so that their deaths are not in vain and serves as a catalyst for others to act against hatred."

-Ava, Nicolet High School, Nicolet High School District, Milwaukee County

"I think it's important to learn about the Holocaust because it's an important part of history. It also shows how prejudice can turn into genocide. This will help us better understand why our actions really matter."

- Brooke, Ozaukee Middle School, Northern Ozaukee School District, Ozaukee County

"The scale of death and war in the Holocaust is just about unbelievable, yet some kids don't know what it is. Especially with the hatred in our world today, we need to teach people about genocide and discrimination so it doesn't happen even more."

-Conlen, Ozaukee Middle School, Northern Ozaukee School District, Ozaukee County

"The harsh realities of what the Holocaust brought to millions and millions of human lives are certainly unfathomable, especially in the overall well-being, fortunate state of living we reside in today. However, the teaching of this tragic topic throughout middle and high school allows students to not only better understand our world history but also better understand the importance of simply being humane to the people, places, and world around us. There should be no question of whether or not the Holocaust education is taught throughout the state of Wisconsin, as it is a turning point in the history mankind, and our world has gone through."

- Kelley, Ozaukee High School, Northern Ozaukee School District, Ozaukee County

- "While the Holocaust was one of the most gruesome moments in world history, it has taught me very important lifelong lessons. Through the dozens of books I've read on the subject as well as the education I have received there was one recurring theme; to never lose hope. The Holocaust has taught me to never lose track of the one blade of grass growing through the pavement, as well as standing up for the people around you."
- Clara, Ozaukee High School, Northern Ozaukee School District, Ozaukee County
- "My generation are the future leaders of our country and in order to prevent further genocides, people must learn. When people learn from these horrors, they can hopefully prevent and stop them from occurring again."
- -Student, Menasha High School, Menasha Joint School District, Winnebago County
- "It's important that we learn about the Holocaust so that everyone can understand the potential dangers of discrimination and oppression. It can help us keep from repeating our mistakes, as well as allowing us to recognize irrational and tyrannical rule. Learning about the Holocaust also allows us to remember the 11 million that lost their lives during that time period."
- -Student, Victory School, Milwaukee Public Schools, Milwaukee County
- "Learning the Holocaust can help us recognize the signs and red flags of discrimination. It's also important to learn about the Holocaust because the victims never did receive justice, and I feel as if learning about them is a way to remember them."
- -Student, Humboldt Park School, Milwaukee Public Schools, Milwaukee County
- "Now that I have learned about the Holocaust I am going to try to use this to help me, help make the world better. Not just saying it but by doing it. I could easily talk to young students about violence and how it corrupts our world today because I see it happen every day, especially in my own neighborhood. They may not think that it is that big of a deal, but it really is and it actually hurts a lot of people."
- -De'Jon, HOPE Christian School, Milwaukee County

Educator statements

- "I want to thank you for the amazing learning opportunity HERC provided. I shared with our principals today how much we learned. It was one of the best PD programs I have been to in a very long time (and I have been teaching for 31 years). My co-teacher and I plan on creating a weeklong lesson on genocide. We are going to reach out after the holidays to set up a school program with you for our 8th grade classes."
- -Yvonne Gilbertson, South Middle School, Eau Claire Area School District, Eau Claire County
- "Giving testimony to Wisconsin's State Senate Committee to require Holocaust education in our schools was a moving experience. Being able to be part of the process of a bill becoming a law and sharing that experience with four of my students remains vivid in my memories. Holocaust education is even more important a year later. Combatting antisemitism, racism, and ignorance is needed in our schools."
- -Yvonne Audi, Assumption Middle School, Wisconsin Rapids Area Catholic Schools, Wood County
- "It is absolutely vital that we ensure that all young people are educated on the realities of the past, including the horrors of the Holocaust. History is not something that simply remains stuck in the past, to be forgotten about as we distance ourselves from certain events or time periods. The Holocaust was amongst the darkest periods in the history of humanity, and was brought about through hatred, prejudice, and appalling ideologies ideas that we absolutely cannot bear to repeat, but equally importantly, that we cannot bear to forget."
- -Dustin Rondeau, Beloit Memorial High School, School District of Beloit, Rock County
- "We cannot stand by and watch! At this time in our history, Holocaust Education is more important than ever. It was true when I first heard a survivor in the 1970s as a high school student. Today, with the rise of insurrectionist movements and many who look the other way, there is a great need for education. The ideals of an infamous dictator continue to live today and must not be allowed to fester unchallenged. Education is the answer to apathy and ignorance of what is at stake. "Those who cannot remember the past are doomed to repeat it." (G. Santayana). Now is the time to act."
- -Daniel Holahan, Marquette University High School, Milwaukee County

"Students in the state of Wisconsin must be educated about the Holocaust. There is no greater example of the danger that hate can manifest than the Holocaust. By having our students engage in the study of the Holocaust, they will graduate from schools across our state equipped with the knowledge and skills to confront hatred beyond the walls of their classroom, an essential asset for the development of humanity."

-Andrew Sotter, Berlin High School, Berlin Area School District, Green Lake County

"The history of the Holocaust provides our students the knowledge of the past, while fostering in them a commitment to bettering their lives and the lives of other people around them. After studying the Holocaust, students who were bystanders now speak out more when they see something they think is wrong; students who used to make prejudiced comments, question the ramifications of their choices; and students who feel that they can't influence the world, now see the power of their voices and the importance of their actions."

- Lindsay McBride, Ozaukee Middle School, Northern Ozaukee School District, Ozaukee County

"Through a thorough and comprehensive study of the Holocaust and other genocides of history, we can learn valuable lessons and insights applicable to contemporary times that must be passed on to today's students...our leaders of tomorrow...so that history does not repeat itself. So that groups of people are not targeted for death due to their race, ethnicity, or religion."

-Bruce Varick, Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County

"Through teaching the Holocaust, reading the book "Night" by Elie Wiesel, and participating in a HERC field trip which included a conversation with a Holocaust survivor, I have seen how a substantial number of students in my class developed empathy through exposure to an unfamiliar culture. These experiences made them become a lot more open-minded."

-Sarah Griffie, Brown Deer Middle/High School, Brown Deer School District, Milwaukee County

"We- students, teachers, staff, and parents- have been talking about you since you left. Such a powerful message and the devotion you have to keep telling it, is remarkable. Our community was so blessed to have met you and to have heard your message." (after listening to a survivor speaker)

-Barry, Oostburg Middle School, Oostburg School District, Sheboygan County

"If we do not provide our students with the tools needed to stop hatred, the past will repeat itself. Holocaust education provides our students with the needed armor to stop the spread of hatred. It engages our students in meaningful discussions to understand the complexities of the Holocaust."

-Jody Fuller, Salem Middle School, Salem School District, Kenosha Count

School	District	City
Christ King Catholic Parish School	Archdiocese of Milwaukee	Wauwatosa
Holy Family Parish Catholic School	Archdiocese of Milwaukee	Milwaukee
Holy Trinity School	Archdiocese of Milwaukee	Kewaskum
Lumen Christi Catholic School	Archdiocese of Milwaukee	Mequon
Marquette University High School	Archdiocese of Milwaukee	Milwaukee
Messmer High School	Archdiocese of Milwaukee	Milwaukee
Messmer Preparatory School	Archdiocese of Milwaukee	Milwaukee
Mother of Good Counsel School	Archdiocese of Milwaukee	Milwaukee
Pius XI Catholic High School	Archdiocese of Milwaukee	Milwaukee
St. Brunos	Archdiocese of Milwaukee	Dousman
St. Joan Antida High School	Archdiocese of Milwaukee	Milwaukee
St. John the 23rd	Archdiocese of Milwaukee	Port Washington
St. Leonard	Archdiocese of Milwaukee	Muskego
St. Adalbert School	Archdiocese of Milwaukee	Milwaukee
St. Anthony on the Lake	Archdiocese of Milwaukee	Pewaukee
St. Joseph's School	Archdiocese of Milwaukee	Racine
St. Jude the Apostle School	Archdiocese of Milwaukee	Wauwatosa
St. Katherine Drexel School	Archdiocese of Milwaukee	Beaver Dam
St. Mary's Parish School	Archdiocese of Milwaukee	Hales Corners
St. Robert School	Archdiocese of Milwaukee	Shorewood
St. Marys Middle School	Archdiocese of Milwaukee	Neenah
St. Thomas Aquinas Academy	Archdiocese of Milwaukee	Milwaukee
Ashland High School	Ashland School District	Ashland
Ashland Middle School	Ashland School District	Ashland
Bayside Middle School	Bayside School District	Fox Point
Big Foot High School	Big Foot Union High School	Walworth
Bruce High School	Bruce	Bruce
Cadott High School	Cadott School District	Cadott
Webster Middle School	Cedarburg	Cedarburg
Chequamegon Middle School	Chequamegon School District	Glidden
Chetek-Weyerhaeuser Middle/High School	Chetek-Weyerhaeuser Area School District	Chetek
Clinton High School	Clinton Community School District	Clinton
Clintonville High School	Clintonville	Clintonville
Cudahy Middle School	Cudahy	Cudahy
Darlington High School	Darlington Community School District	Darlington
Foxview Intermiediate School	De Pere School District	De Pere
De Pere High School	De Pere School District	De Pere
De Soto Middle/High School	De Soto Area Schools	De Soto
Assumption Catholic School	Diocese of LaCrosse	Wisconsin Rapids
Drummond Elementary	Drummond Area School District	Drummond
Drummond High School	Drummond Area School District	Drummond
Durand High School	Durand-Arkansaw School District	Durand
East Troy Middle School	East Troy Community School District	East Troy
DeLong Middle School	Eau Claire Area School District	Eau Claire
Memorial High School	Eau Claire Area School District	Eau Claire
North Star High School	Eau Claire Area School District	Eau Claire

North High School	Eau Claire Area School District	Eau Claire
South Middle School	Eau Claire Area School District	Eau Claire
McKinley Charter	Eau Claire Area School District	Eau Claire
Elcho Middle School	Elcho School District	Elcho
Elk Mound High School	Elk Mound Are School District	Elk Mound
Wisconsin Hills Middle School	Elmbrook Schools	Brookfield
Elmwood High School	Elmwood School District	Elmwood
Erin School	Erin School District	Hartford
JC MCKenna Middle School	Evansville Community	Evansville
Ft Atkinson Middle School	Fort Atkinson	Fort Atkinson
Bayside Middle School	Fox Point-Bayside	Milwaukee
Gibraltar High School	Gibraltar Area Schools	Fish Creek
Glen Hills Middle School	Glendale-River Hills	Glendale
Grantsburg Middle School	Grantsburg School District	Grantsburg
Greenfield High School	Greenfield School District	Greenfield
Hudson High School	Hudson School District	Hudson
Hurley Elementary	Hurley School District	Hurley
Hurley High School	Hurley School District	Hurley
Academy of Excellence	Independent	Milwaukee
Bader Hillel High School	Independent	Milwaukee
Fox Valley Christian School	Independent	Neenah
Indian Community School	Independent	Franklin
Milwaukee Academy of Science	Independent	Milwaukee
Milwaukee Jewish Day School	Independent	Milwaukee
Oostburg Christian School	Independent	Oostburg
St Paul's Lutheran School	Independent	Cudahy
Star of Bethlehem	Independent	New Berlin
University School Milwaukee	Independent	Milwaukee
Penfield Montessori Academy	Independent	Milwaukee
Arise Shine Home School Group	Independent	Brown Deer
Winnebago Lutheran Academy	Independent	Fond du Lac
Blessed Sacrament Parish School	Independent	Milwaukee
Hmong American Peace Academy (HAPA)	Independent	Milwaukee
Janesville Craig High School	Janesville	Janesville
Indian Trail High School	Kenosha	Kenosha
Kettle Moraine High School	Kettle Moraine School District	Wales
Kettle Moraine Middle School	Kettle Moraine School District	Dousman
Little Chute Middle School	Little Chute Area School District	Little Chute
Loyal High School	Loyal	Loyal
Georgia O'Keefe Middle School	Madison Metropolitan	Madison
Maple Dale	Maple Dale-Indian Hill	Milwaukee
Northwestern High School	Maple School District	Maple:
Northwestern Middle School	Maple School District	Poplar
Markesan High School	Markesan School District	Markesan
Marshfield High School	Marshfield	Marshfield
Mayville Middle School	Mayville	Mayville
McFarland High School	McFarland	McFarland

Wisconsin Virtual Academy	McFarland	McFarland
Mellen High School	Mellen School District	Mellen
Bruce Guadalupe	Milwaukee Public Schools	Milwaukee
Burdick School	Milwaukee Public Schools	Milwaukee
Golda Meir School	Milwaukee Public Schools	Milwaukee
Milwaukee School of Languages	Milwaukee Public Schools	Milwaukee
Milwaukee Academy of Chinese Language	Milwaukee Public Schools	Milwaukee
MLK Elementary	Milwaukee Public Schools	Milwaukee
Parkside School	Milwaukee Public Schools	Milwaukee
Rogers Street Academy	Milwaukee Public Schools	Milwaukee
Wedgewood IB	Milwaukee Public Schools	Milwaukee
Obama School of Career and Technical Education	Milwaukee Public Schools	Milwaukee
Riverside University High School	Milwaukee Public Schools	Milwaukee
Bay View High School	Milwaukee Public Schools	Milwaukee
Vincent High School	Milwaukee Public Schools	Milwaukee
Hayes Bilingual School	Milwaukee Public Schools	Milwaukee
South Division High School	Milwaukee Public Schools	Milwaukee
Victory School	Milwaukee Public Schools	Milwaukee
Mount Horeb Middle School	Mount Horeb Area School District	Mount Horeb
Ulster Project	N/A	Elm Grove
New Berlin Middle School	New Berlin School District	New Berlin
New Richmond High School	New Richmond School District	New Richmond
New Richmond Middle School	New Richmond School District	New Richmond
Ozaukee Middle School	Northern Ozaukee	Fredonia
Oak Creek East Middle School	Oak Creek-Franklin	Oak Creek
Global Academy- Oshkosh West	Oshkosh	Oshkosh
Riverview Middle School	Plymouth School District	Plymouth
Port Washington High School	Port Washington Saukville School District	Port Washington
Port Washington High School	Port Washington Saukville School District	Port Washington
Academies of Racine Mitchell	Racine Unified School District	Racine
Case High School	Racine Unified School District	Racine
Gilmore Middle School	Racine Unified School District	Racine
Horlick High School	Racine Unified School District	Racine
Park High School	Racine Unified School District	Racine
R.E.A.L.	Racine Unified School District	Sturtevant
Rice Lake High School	Rice Lake	Rice Lake
Rio Middle/High School	Rio Community School District	Rio
Ashland Middle School	School District of Ashland	Ashland
Beloit Memorial High School	School District of Beloit	Beloit
Brown Deer Middle School	School District of Brown Deer	Brown Deer
Jefferson Middle School	School District of Jefferson	Jefferson
Milton High School	School District of Milton	Milton
Osceola High School	School District of Osceola	Osceola
Shell Lake Middle School	School District of Shell Lake	Shell Lake
Shiocton Middle/High School	School District of Shiocton	Shiocton
South Milwaukee High School	School District of South Milwaukee	South Milwaukee
West De Pere High School	School District of West De Pere	De Pere

	(Last 1Wo Teals)	
Westfield Area Middle/High School	School District of Westfield	Westfield
Tenor High School, Cathedral Square Campus	Seeds of Health	Milwaukee
Tenor High School, Journal Square Campus	Seeds of Health	Milwaukee
Veritas High School	Seeds of Health	Milwaukee
Seeds of Health Elementary	Seeds of Health	Milwaukee
Black Creek Middle School	Seymour Community School District	Black Creek
Warriner School	Sheboygan	Sheboygan
Horace Mann Middle Schools	Sheboygan Area School District	Sheboygan
Sheboygan Falls High School	Sheboygan Falls	Sheboygan Falls
Sheboygan Falls Middle School	Sheboygan Falls	Sheboygan Falls
Shell Lake School	Shell Lake	Shell Lake
Somerset Senior High	Somerset	Somerset
Meadowview Middle School	Sparta Area School District	Sparta
Sparta High School	Sparta Area School District	Sparta
Swallow School	Swallow	Hartland
Savanna Oaks Middle School	Verona Area School District	Fitchburg
Washburn Elemenrary	Washburn School District	Washburn
Washburn Middle School	Washburn School District	Washburn
Bethesda Elementary	Waukesha	Waukesha
Waunakee Intermediate School	Waunakee Community	Waunakee
Parkside School	Wautoma Area School District	Wautoma
Dottke High School	West Allis-West Milwaukee	West Allis
Decorah Elementary	West Bend School District	West Bend
West De Pere Middle School	West DePere	De Pere
Westosha Central HS	Westosha	Salem
Weyauwega Fremont High School	Weyauwega-Fremont School District	Weyauwega
Whitewater Middle School	Whitewater	Whitewater
Whitnall High School	Whitnall School District	Greenfield
Winneconne Middle School	Winneconne Community School District	Winneconne
Winter Middle School	Winter School District	Winter
Other School Districts Served Through Educator	Trainings Not Listed Above	
School District		
Abbotsford School District		
Belmont Community School District		
Bloomer School District		
Boscobel Area School District		**************************************
Cassville School District		
Chippewa Falls		
Colby School District		о Напродого на бразо на пред на Напродого на пред на
Cuba City School District		
Deerfield Community School District		
Dodgeville School District		
Flambeau School District		
Iowa-Grant School District		

Ithaca School District	
Lancaster Community Schools	
Neillsville School District	
New Auburn School District	
New Richmond	
Northland Pines School District	
Owen-Whithee School District	
Prairie du Chien Area School District	
River Valley Schools	
Riverdale School District	
School District of Black Hawk	
School District of Ladysmith	
School District of Nekoosa	
School District of Shullsburg	
Seneca Area School District	
Shorewood School District	
Weston School District	
CESA Trainings	City Training Held In
CESA 1	Pewaukee
CESA 2	Whitewater
CESA 3	Fennimore
CESA 4	West Salem
CESA 5	Portage
CESA 6	Oshkosh
CESA 8	Gillett
CESA 9	Tomahawk
CESA 10	Chippewa Falls
CESA 11	Turtle Lake
CESA 12	Ashland