

HB1181 – FWA

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Good afternoon Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins (my own District 20 delegate 😊) and members

My name is Evie Frankl, a daughter of Holocaust survivors and a member of Jewish Voice for Peace DC Metro Chapter. I am speaking favorably with amendments on HB1181.

As a former teacher and education advocate, I am familiar with the impacts of government-created curricular mandates. They are – at best – difficult to implement and enforce; at worst they carry unstated agendas and dangers to students that are difficult to undo.

HB1181, however well-intentioned, is replete in warning signs of all the above.

1. Nick-named the “Educate to Hate” act, HB1181 purports to address all forms of hate and bigotry, but tasks educators with teaching specific content only about the Holocaust. Rev. Coby Little’s remarks on SB1058 asking amendments to include the “Transatlantic Slave Trade” in every instance in which the bill mentions the Holocaust goes a long way to solving this imbalance, but still leaves other groups without specific content. As Jew, I believe that isolating and elevating hatred against Jews above those of other groups has, in fact, a negative rather than positive impact.
2. Witnesses during the Senate hearing made mention of the lack of common knowledge about the Holocaust. This is tragic. As tragic is that this lack of historical knowledge extends to many other people’s histories. I would venture, for example, in educating against anti-Asian, anti-Native American hate and Islamophobia that most people age 18-30 have no knowledge of Japanese internment camps, the full atrocities against Native peoples or of what Palestinians call the Nakba or Catastrophe of 1948. I would therefore further amend HB1181 to include specific content about horrors perpetrated against each group mentioned and the histories leading up to those events.
3. Question? How do we address all this without, as the bill currently requires, not expanding “the total amount of instruction”. Here, I find myself in agreement with the State Board of Education. A collaborative effort developed by them could comprise a more inclusive, intentional and expertly informed process that includes a study of what is already included and should included in our Social Studies curricula.

Thank you.