



EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

SENATE BILL 837

EDUCATION – CURRICULUM – STUDY OF THE HOLOCAUST (EDUCATE TO STOP THE HATE ACT)

FEBRUARY 22, 2023

**TESTIMONY OF AVI LENCZ,
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, AGUDATH ISRAEL OF MARYLAND**

STATEMENT OF INFORMATION

Agudath Israel of Maryland speaks on behalf of the Orthodox Jewish communities across Maryland, on behalf of the 10,000 students attending 30 Jewish day schools in our great state, and on behalf of the many but dwindling number of survivors of the Holocaust and their families, who are such an important part of our communities.

We are fully supportive of the intent of the sponsors of this bill and applaud their great sensitivity to ensuring the mantra of “never forget” is fully upheld and maintained. We fully concur with the statements in the preamble to this act, viz. “The Holocaust was a watershed event in the course of human history... it occurred because individuals, organizations, and governments made choices that legalized discrimination leading to prejudice, hatred, and mass murder... Holocaust education will help students... explore the dangers of remaining silent, apathetic, and indifferent to the oppression of others; and learn how the abuse of power can lead to the implementation of destructive policies...” There is no question that these lessons are timely now as ever.

However, we do wish to voice the following perspective: the state should not dictate the particulars of curriculum to its nonpublic schools. Our students do receive Holocaust education in school (as well as Holocaust education opportunities outside of school, in addition to interactions they may have with survivors in our communities); other nonpublic school students in Maryland do so as well. The value of allowing Maryland’s nonpublic schools to craft their curriculum independently (while ensuring they meet State licensing, approval, and institutional requirements) is long recognized, and should not be compromised, admirable as the intent may be.

Speaking on behalf of the Orthodox Jewish communities of Maryland, we laud the intent of this bill of ensuring that students become better-versed in the evils of the Holocaust. At the same time, we state our concerns with the potential compromising of the integrity and independence of nonpublic schools and opening the door for the state’s intrusion into mandating the curriculum for nonpublic schools.