

BALTIMORE SCHOOL *for the* ARTS

Testimony for Maryland General Assembly – House of Delegates
House Bill HB0638 - Education – Holocaust Education Assistance Grant Program – Established
Ways and Means Committee
February 22, 2023

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF PASSAGE

Warm greetings to the esteemed members of the General Assembly. Thank you for hearing this bill today regarding the importance of Holocaust education. My name is Gerad Bandos, and I'm a high school chemistry teacher at Baltimore School for the Arts, in Baltimore City Public Schools. You might be wondering, as I did six years ago, what bearing the Holocaust has on chemistry, but if we have any hope of cultivating scientifically literate citizens, we must seize on the role of science in the Holocaust, as a genuine example of the relationship between science and society. I begin the year with a module entitled "Science, Technology, and Society." We examine ethical and moral imperatives of science, such as informed consent and whether a scientist with detrimental views and hateful speech should be received in the scientific community. My students examine the moral failings of the scientists of that generation, as well as the ethical dilemmas we face today in the scientific legacy of the Holocaust. How do we relate to medical knowledge from experiments performed on Jewish inmates without possibility of consent? What obligation does a scientist—for example, the developer of Zyklon B—have to ensure his discovery is not used for anything evil? We also discuss the successes of scientists throughout the Holocaust, such as Lise Meitner who effectively explained nuclear fission while she was fleeing Nazi persecution, or Niels Bohr, who used his power and privilege as a scientist to guarantee a place of refuge for the Jews of Denmark.

The only way I have ever been able to make these connections is by attending privately run professional development workshops on Holocaust Education. These workshops were hosted by the Jewish Museum of Maryland, for free or minimal cost to participants. The cost was typically the food and transportation for off-site learning. If the cost had been more, or if I lived outside of Baltimore and had to travel to the Jewish Museum from farther away, I would not have taken these opportunities. The State needs to provide for similar professional development opportunities for educators across Maryland, paid for or provided by the school districts, and encouraged and incentivized by their districts. Without this valuable professional development, educators are missing crucial parts to helping their students grow into active and literate members of society.

I have one more thing to note. My school, at the beginning of the school year, had trouble with antisemitic graffiti—swastikas appearing in bathrooms. While the administrators dealt with the disciplinary response, I was the first teacher approached to help the whole school with the restorative response, putting together a program with in-person and asynchronous components for Holocaust education. This program included four weeks of Holocaust education "bites" sent out to students every day with reliably sourced (USHMM, et al.) information and pictures, group viewings and discussions of excerpts of the PBS Ken Burns documentary *The US and the Holocaust*, and a school-wide assembly with a Holocaust refugee. My question for you today, is that when something similar happens in any other school across Maryland, what teacher or administrator will be ready to help students heal? Vote YES for HB638 - Education – Holocaust Education Assistance Grant Program.