



Oregon

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Testimony in Support
Senate Bill 664
House Education Committee
May 8, 2019

Chair Doherty and Members of the House Committee on Education,

For the record, I am Lindsey Capps, Chief Education Officer and education policy advisor to Governor Brown. I am offering testimony on the Governor's behalf in strong support for SB 664 and the value of requiring instruction on the Holocaust and genocide in Oregon public schools.

We honor and acknowledge the survivors of the Holocaust for their profound example – to us and to our children – in demonstrating the resolve and resilience of the human spirit, and the capacity to demonstrate generosity and compassion in teaching future generations the lessons of their unthinkable experience.

In their honor and for the benefit of our society and communities, the legislation before you today states as a fundamental goal to develop students' respect for cultural diversity and help students gain insight into the importance of the protection of fundamental human rights for all people.

This goal is consistent with the purpose, expectations and standards we as a state have established for all schools in providing social sciences education to students from kindergarten through 12th grade. That purpose is to help our youth develop into humane and productive citizens in a pluralistic society by developing our students' knowledge and skills across multiple disciplines of learning that address the totality of human experience.

Through integrated, standards-based curriculum and instruction, schools and educators seek to provide students' the skills to engage in meaningful inquiry, critical thinking, to make judgments, and communicate thought and ideas based on fact and reason. These are skills intended to serve our youth in relating to, navigating and thriving in a complex, interdependent world, with a critical understanding and awareness of its history, cultures and religious traditions.

Further, the teaching of social sciences in our schools is intended to endow our students with a understanding of the values embodied in our democratic form of government and that of democratic societies across the world – most especially to understand the underlying commitments to equality, justice and tolerance for diversity grounded in the freedom of conscience, thought and speech; and the rule of law.

Engaging our students in meaningful learning and reflection about the Holocaust is not a requirement of our schools today nor is it expressly called out in our social sciences standards. Yet it is a profoundly important event in human history, if not a defining one that has shaped and continues to shape the landscape of our modern world.

And as our Governor and the authors and cosponsors of this legislation understand well, to teach and engage students in learning about the Holocaust is an opportunity to illuminate for students our common humanity. And from the horror and tragedy of this genocide, to reflect on transcendent and redeeming human values and the responsibilities of citizens in a free, democratic society. Responsibilities that we hope students come to understand as their responsibility: to combat, in both personal and systemic ways, discrimination and other cruel and intolerable acts against members of our community borne of efforts to spread fear, suspicion and innuendo.

As our state has moved forward carefully and thoughtfully to evolve our social sciences standards and require curriculum to be developed in our schools to address gaps in reflecting the diversity of our students, their histories and cultures, it is appropriate that the Holocaust and genocide education be provided its rightful place as well.

Governor Brown strongly urges your support and passage of Senate 664.