

Testimony in Opposition to HB1527

Chairman Heinert and Members of the Committee,

My name is Amber Severson and I am the social studies teacher at Alexander Public School in Alexander. I have been teaching for nearly a decade and have a Master of Arts degree in History. I also teach a dual credit United States History course through Williston State College, which I am able to offer to students in Alexander. I am a lifelong learner of history and a dedicated teacher of it as well.

A law mandating Holocaust education is unnecessary, as North Dakota already includes World War II, including the Holocaust, in its established state standards for North Dakota Studies, United States History, and World History under standards ND.6_12.4, US.6_12.1-6, and WH.6_12.1-6. North Dakota Studies examines how the global impact of WWII affected the state, introducing students to key aspects of the war that lay the foundation for deeper analysis in their World and United States History courses. Additionally, in Problems of Democracy, under standard C.6_12.2, students study different forms of government using historical examples, including WWII, to discuss how such atrocities can occur.

This legislation represents government overreach and a wasteful use of legislative time and resources. The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction is the appropriate body to set educational standards, not the state legislature. This entity develops curriculum utilizing the expertise of teachers specialized in each subject area. Who better to shape an inclusive and equitable curriculum than the educators who work directly with these topics?

Furthermore, if a special law is required for the Holocaust, consistency would demand similar legislation for every historical atrocity where groups were systematically targeted. For instance: the Holodomor in Soviet Ukraine, where Stalin's policies caused a forced famine that killed millions in the 1930s; Stalin's Great Purge, a campaign of

political repression that led to the execution or imprisonment of hundreds of thousands in concentration camps; and Stalin's treatment of his own civilians during WWII, where an estimated 6 to 20 million people perished under his rule. Other examples include the Armenian Genocide, where the Ottoman Empire attempted to erase Armenian identity through the systematic extermination of 1.5 million Armenians during WWI; the Rwandan Genocide, where nearly 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu were slaughtered in just 100 days due to cultural tensions in the 1990s; and the Cambodian Genocide, in which the Khmer Rouge regime executed, starved, and overworked nearly a quarter of Cambodia's population during the 1970s. These mass atrocities, among countless others throughout history, would all warrant similar legislative action under the same logic. Where would it end?

This is not a question of the Holocaust's importance. It is unquestionably one of history's greatest tragedies and must be studied. However, singling it out for legislative action sets a problematic precedent and distracts from the broader responsibility of ensuring a comprehensive, well-rounded history curriculum; one that is best developed by the experts already entrusted with our educational standards.

Thank you for your time and consideration.