

To the Members of the House Education Committee,

I am writing regarding HB 1527 related to required Holocaust education. As a high school social studies teacher at Milnor Public School, I understand the importance of educating students about the events of the Holocaust. Whether that be the dangerous rhetoric of antisemitism that seems to be growing in our current day, or the unimaginable horrors that millions of innocent people faced at the hands of truly disgusting individuals. However, I think that the bill is an unnecessary overreach by the state to require the way in which I choose to discuss this topic.

My main concern with this bill is how it intends to add to current North Dakota Standards with how we teach Social Studies in the state. As the bill is currently written, it requires me to teach about the Holocaust in my United States History class. While it does get brought up in my U.S. History teachings about World War II, it is much more of a focus in my World History lessons to help relate it to other horrific events that occurred to civilians in World War II. I also feel that by requiring this in the U.S. History standards, it takes away the role that the other Allies played in helping to liberate various camps, including the role that the Soviet Union played as being the first to encounter these death camps.

Another issue I have with this current phrasing of the bill is how in Section 1, 1c (line 15) “Nazi’ means the national socialist German workers' party, a political party that rose to power in 1933 and governed Germany until 1945.” I believe that this is an unnecessary point to make, as we continue to see hate groups around the country and world use the symbols and verbiage of Hitler’s Third Reich to justify their own hatred and bigotry. People who use this to portray their ideals is just as much a ‘Nazi’ as those that supported Adolf Hitler during his regime.

Please vote no on this bill. As a teacher for over five years, I believe that the training I have and the knowledge I’ve gained by working with state standards and curriculum development in my classroom will allow me to make the correct choice in how and when I discuss this material in my own classroom. I know my students. I know my school. I know when it is appropriate to teach tough topics and how to do it. I do believe that this bill is good natured. However, I do not believe it is necessary and should be voted down.

Thank you for your consideration,

Nicholas Foertsch