

HB 1527

To the honorable legislators of the North Dakota Education Committee.

My name is Randy Neal, I am the senior director of engagement for Christians United for Israel, a grassroots organization with 10,000,000 members nationwide, over 20,000 of which are in North Dakota. Part of our mission consist of efforts to advance legislation combating the scourge of antisemitism – in whatever form it rears its ugly head – as we have done in dozens of states across the Union.

Admittedly, our preferred approach to advancing such commonsense standards would be to work directly with the Department of Public Instruction, as we have done in other states, but our efforts to do so in North Dakota went unanswered.

As such, we are deeply grateful to Rep. Roger Maki and every other member of your august body who shares the view, alongside 83% of North Dakotans, that Holocaust education is important, “in part to that it doesn’t happen again.”

Renowned author, educator and Holocaust Survivor Elie Wiesel insisted that the only antidote to antisemitism is education. I think it is safe to say that most on this committee can recall learning about the Holocaust in high school or junior high school. North Dakota's study standards today are exactly what Mr. Wiesel was warning about. The Holocaust is no longer anywhere to be found. Sift through your world history standards and you will not find one mention of the Holocaust. Or of Hitler, or Auschwitz, or nazis. A 2020 Topline nationwide study on Holocaust education showed that of millennials and Gen. Z in North Dakota 41% cannot name one concentration camp. 12% believe the Jews caused the Holocaust. 29% do not know what Auschwitz was. 58% did not know 6,000,000 Jews were killed in the Holocaust.

With the tide of antisemitism sweeping across the country, elected officials see the correlation between a lack of Holocaust education standards and a rise in antisemitism and they are determined to correct this problem. To date, nearly two dozen states have laws compelling and/or standards enhancing Holocaust education. In

recent months and years Texas, Alabama, Idaho, Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Arizona, to name a few, have made such changes. Moreover, federal funding has been secured for teacher certification, and approved curriculum is available digitally at no cost.

The North Dakota Department of public instruction has a daunting task and does an amazing job of graduating high school seniors with a high percentage equipped and prepared to go into the workforce or on to college. But it is a terrible disservice to your students, to the character of your state, to omit this dark chapter in history and the critical thinking and moral clarity that is born when one tries to understand how and why the Holocaust happened.

We respectfully suggest that as other states are adding mandatory study standards or curriculum that include Holocaust education, that you, the members of this committee do not just have an opportunity to correct this problem, we believe that you have a duty and responsibility to do so.

Thank you in advance for giving serious consideration to this important step for North Dakota and – we hope - adding your state to the list of those that choose to combat antisemitism by the only effective means: education.

Sincerely, Randy Neal