



**OHIO HOLOCAUST & GENOCIDE
MEMORIAL & EDUCATION COMMISSION**

June 23, 2024

Chairman Shane Wilkin
Senate Building
1 Capitol Square
Ground Floor 050
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Chairman Wilkin, Vice-Chair Hillyer, and members of the Ohio Sunset Review Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Ohio Holocaust and Genocide Memorial and Education Commission, along with our fiscal agent, the Ohio History Connection.

The Commission was established in December 2020 through Senate Bill 310 passed by the 133rd General Assembly. The inaugural board of Commissioners were largely appointed throughout 2021, as defined by our statute, comprising 8 Governor appointments, 4 Ohio legislators, and 3 members of the Governor's cabinet who serve as ex-officio Commissioners. I was hired as their first executive director in June 2022, and in September 2023, we hired 2 additional full-time staff.

In early 2023, the Commission initiated a strategic planning endeavor, leveraging the responsibilities outlined in the founding statute to formulate strategic priorities for fiscal years 2024 and 2025. With the passing of the current biennial budget, which included a substantial investment of \$1.8 million from the state of Ohio for the Commission's work, the strategic plan was finalized and approved in June 2023.

The strategic priorities of this plan, aligned with the duties assigned by our statute (ORC 197), are as follows:

- To elevate high-quality Holocaust and genocide programming that is easily accessible for every student in Ohio.
- To become a leader in providing funding and other resources with quality educational and memorialization programming and initiatives.
- To become a hub for connection of organizations and resources to raise awareness and improve quality and consistency of Holocaust and genocide programming and memorialization.
- To educate public officials about Holocaust and genocide history, and how these events continue to happen in modern societies.

- To support development of recurring public Holocaust memorial events in all 88 counties in Ohio.

In FY24 alone, the Commission has ambitiously embarked upon the achievement of objectives as defined within these priorities. To date, over 10,000 Ohio students have been impacted through education initiatives that include Commission-funded field trips to Holocaust and genocide museums, exhibits and memorials throughout the state, as well as high-quality instruction in the subject by educators who have received Commission scholarships to attend professional development in Ohio and abroad. We have awarded 27 program grants to non-profit institutions and schools for projects that bring Holocaust and genocide learning experiences to all Ohioans through museum exhibitions, musical productions, and scholarly lecture series, among other programs. Planning is underway with 5 Ohio universities to create certificate programs in Holocaust and genocide studies for undergraduates, graduate students and educators. We are working diligently with partners in all corners of the state to build greater awareness of the Commission and of the funding for this education that we provide through the state's financial support.

In conclusion, the Commission is only just beginning to utilize the resources allocated by the Governor and the General Assembly to realize the vision of an Ohio where Holocaust and genocide education is accessible to all Ohioans to build a more informed and engaged society. I respectfully ask for reauthorization of the Ohio Holocaust and Genocide Memorial and Education Commission.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. I will be glad to answer any questions you may have.