

During Genocide Awareness Month, Advocates & Elected Officials Push to Ensure NY Schools are Teaching About the Holocaust

Glen Cove, NY - April 29, 2021 - Today, NYS Senator Anna M. Kaplan (D-North Hills), Assemblywoman Nily Rozic (D-Fresh Meadows), American Jewish Committee (AJC) Long Island, Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) Long Island, the Simon Wiesenthal Center, the Holocaust Memorial Tolerance Center LI, NYS Senator Jim Gaughran (D-Northport), NYS Senator Todd Kaminsky (D-Long Beach), and Assemblymember Charles Lavine (D-Glen Cove) stood together at the Holocaust Memorial Tolerance Center LI to highlight shocking statistics about Holocaust knowledge among New Yorkers, and press for the passage of legislation, S.121/A.472, which would ensure that students across New York are receiving a meaningful education on the Holocaust as required by existing State law.

Bill sponsor New York State Senator Anna M. Kaplan said, "When we talk about the Holocaust, we say NEVER FORGET-but in order to forget something, you need to learn about it in the first place. We're doing a terrible job of teaching our kids about the atrocities of the Holocaust and the 6 million Jews who were murdered by the Nazis, and in a time when disinformation is exploding, and anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic violence are on the rise, it's never been more important to teach the lessons of the Holocaust to the next generation."

"I'm proud to partner with Assemblywoman Nily Rozic on legislation that will assess how well schools are doing at educating our kids about the Holocaust, and come up with a plan to ensure that every child is learning about our history in every school across the state. It's never been more important than it is today, and we need to get it done this year."

"As we experience historic levels of anti-Semitism in New York and around the country, Never Again needs to be a call to action and not merely a platitude offered on Holocaust Remembrance Day and Genocide Awareness Month," said bill sponsor Assemblywoman Nily Rozic. "When study after study delineate embarrassing ignorance and misinformation about the Holocaust, we need to rectify the issue at the source - educational requirements. Ensuring that the Holocaust is properly taught in schools coupled with education on recognizing anti-Semitism and other hate crimes is a crucial first step in stopping dangerous conspiracy theories."

A recent study by the nonprofit Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference) revealed disturbing findings about Holocaust knowledge among New Yorkers ages 18-39, including that 58% cannot name a single concentration camp, 19% believe that Jews caused the Holocaust, and 28% believe the Holocaust is a myth or has been exaggerated. In each of these three metrics, New York had the worst score of any state in the US.

Legislation introduced in the New York



From left: Senator Anna M. Kaplan; Michael Cohen, Eastern Director, Simon Wiesenthal Center; Senator Jim Gaughran; Assemblywoman Nily Rozic; Arnie Herz, President, American Jewish Committee (AJC) LI.

State Senate and Assembly by Senator Kaplan and Assemblywoman Rozic, S.121/A.472, would ensure that New York students are learning about the Holocaust at school, something that 90% of the general population considers 'important' or 'somewhat important' according to a recent study by the American Jewish Committee (AJC).

The bill, S.121/A.472, would:

Authorize the Commissioner of Education to conduct a study to determine which school districts are offering instruction on the Holocaust in compliance with Section 801 of the Education Law,

Require a report on the findings of the study by the first of January after the bill becomes law, and

Direct the Commissioner to promulgate rules and regulations ensuring school districts are offering instruction on the Holocaust in compliance with Section 801 of the Education Law

Arnie Herz, President, and Eric Post, Director, American Jewish Committee (AJC) Long Island said "The lessons of the Holocaust are universal and as relevant today as they were seven decades ago. New York State mandates Holocaust education in its schools, but doesn't have the reporting mechanisms in place to know if schools are carrying out this instruction. The first step in ensuring Holocaust education is robust in New York State is to find out what schools are teaching and this is the intent of Senator Kaplan and Assemblywoman Rozic's bill. As we recognize genocide awareness month, there is no better time to commit to making sure sharing the lessons of the Holocaust are passed on to all students through the adoption of Assembly Bill 472 and Senate Bill 121."

Andrea Bolender, Chair, Holocaust Memorial & Tolerance Center of Nassau County, said, "HMTTC has worked with many Long Island school districts to offer a standardized and thorough Holocaust and genocide curriculum, but much work remains to be done. We support this bill as

we know that the only effective vaccination for hate is education."

Adam Novak, Chairman, and Mindy Perlmutter, Executive Director, JCRC-LI, said "JCRC-LI applauds the members of the NYS Senate and Assembly who are sponsoring and co-sponsoring the Holocaust Education Bill, especially NYS Senator Anna Kaplan and NYS Assemblywoman Nily Rozic. This legislation will hopefully ensure that all of our students throughout New York State will be properly taught about the Holocaust, so when we utter the words Never Forget and Never Again, it is truly understood."

Michael Cohen, Eastern Director, Simon Wiesenthal Center, said "The Simon Wiesenthal Center thanks the sponsors and co-sponsors of A472 and its companion Senate bill that will mandate that every child in the state of New York is taught the lessons from the Nazi Holocaust. Without educating our younger generations, 'Never Again' will have no meaning in the future."

Avi Posnick, Regional Director, StandWithUs Northeast & New England, said "At StandWithUs, we focus on education. We must ensure that our schools here in NY are properly educating about the Holocaust."

"We are now more than 75 years since the Holocaust ended and many students today, unfortunately, have not and most likely will not have the opportunity to meet a Holocaust survivor. We must ensure that the history of the Holocaust is taught today so that it is not forgotten tomorrow. As then General Dwight Eisenhower said, "Get it all on record now - get the films - get the witnesses - because somewhere down the road of history someone will get up and say that this never happened."

"We have all the films and records, now we must make sure they are shared with our children. There are those who are engaged in a campaign of ignorance to deny, distort, and dismiss the Holocaust. They are counting on our students'

innocence and gullibility. If we do not teach our students about that time in history, we leave them not only uninformed but unarmed to recognize and counter those same hateful messages when they appear today."

New York State Senator Jim Gaughran said, "It is vital that students be educated about the horrors of the past, including the Holocaust, so as not to repeat history. The continued uptick in hate crimes in our region and nation is horrifying and we must take action to stem this crisis."

New York State Senator Todd Kaminsky said, "The fact that more than half of New Yorkers surveyed cannot name a single concentration camp, while nearly one in five believe the Jews caused the Holocaust, is deeply troubling and calls for immediate action."

"By ensuring our children are taught about the Holocaust, we can foster a more tolerant society and stamp out the spate of hate crimes that have infested our state and nation."

New York State Assemblymember Charles Lavine remarked, "As a representative of the state of New York and a Jew whose entire European family was murdered by the Nazis and their allies, I am proud to support this legislation to ensure students are taught about the Holocaust. It works hand in hand with my Hate Education bill which makes learning about the noose and swastika compulsory. We must never cease in our efforts to attack hatred through education."

Nassau County Executive Laura Curran said, "Nassau County recently commemorated the 75th anniversary of World War II and honored the diminishing number of survivors of the Holocaust and veterans who served in World War II. We must redouble our efforts to ensure present and future generations understand the lessons of past."

Curran concluded, "With anti-Semitism on the rise again, it is more important than ever that we speak up and combat hatred through education."