

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2037

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to Holocaust and genocide education in public schools.

Brief Description: Concerning Holocaust and genocide education in public schools.

Sponsors: Representatives Couture, Senn, Leavitt, Fitzgibbon, Rude, Hutchins, Low, Christian, Ramel, Ryu, Ormsby, Barnard, Graham, Callan, Macri, Cheney, Sandlin, Goodman, Caldier, Nance, Riccelli, Reeves, Paul, Pollet, Griffey and Davis.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/23/24, 1/29/24 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires, beginning with the 2027-28 school year, certain public schools to provide instruction on the Holocaust and other genocides and crimes against humanity when the topic aligns with the social studies learning standards.
- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to publish resources to support Holocaust and genocide education.
- Designates April as International Genocide Prevention and Awareness Month and requires public schools to provide age-appropriate activities related to Holocaust and genocide education.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 15 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Shavers, Vice Chair; Rude, Ranking Minority Member; McEntire, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist,

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Couture, Eslick, Harris, McClintock, Nance, Ortiz-Self, Pollet, Steele, Stonier and Timmons.

Staff: Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

Background:

Every public middle school, junior high school, and high school is strongly encouraged to include in its curriculum instruction on the events of the period in modern world history known as the Holocaust, the systemic, German state-sponsored persecution and murder of Jews and other innocent victims by the Nazi regime and its collaborators between the years 1933 and 1945. The instruction may also include other examples of genocide and crimes against humanity.

It is specified that the studying of this material is intended to: examine the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and intolerance; prepare students to be responsible citizens in a pluralistic democracy; and be a reaffirmation of the commitment of free peoples never again to permit such occurrences.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), in collaboration with an expert Washington nonprofit organization that teaches the lessons of the Holocaust, must develop, and annually publish electronically, best practices and guidelines for high quality instruction on this topic. When offered by public schools, instruction on this topic must follow these best practices and guidelines.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Holocaust and Genocide Education.

Beginning with the 2027-28 school year, when the topic aligns with the social studies learning standards, public middle schools, junior high schools, and high schools are required—rather than strongly encouraged—to provide instruction on the Holocaust and other genocides and crimes against humanity in every region of the world and at various points in history.

It is specified that the Holocaust was the systemic, state-sponsored genocide perpetrated between 1933 and 1945 by the Nazi regime and its collaborators with the aim of annihilating the Jewish people, and that, during the Holocaust, the Nazis also targeted other groups for various reasons, including people with disabilities, the Romani people, political dissidents, and gay men.

In addition, public schools are strongly encouraged to offer at least one Holocaust and genocide education stand-alone elective that is available to students at least once during grades 6 through 12.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), in collaboration with a Washington nonprofit organization with expertise in teaching the lessons of the Holocaust and other nonprofit organizations with expertise in teaching lessons on genocide and crimes against humanity in different regions of the world and at various points in history, must annually update the best practices and guidelines for high quality instruction that it developed on this topic.

The OSPI must also electronically publish, and update as needed, guidance on vertical alignment, materials, and professional learning to support implementation of the stand-alone elective.

International Genocide Prevention and Awareness Month.

April of each year is designated International Genocide Prevention and Awareness Month to provide space for formal recognition of the Holocaust and other examples of genocide and crimes against humanity.

During the month of April, each public school must conduct or promote age-appropriate educational activities that provide instruction, awareness, and understanding of the Holocaust and genocide education to all students. These activities may include classroom instruction, guest speaker presentations, school assemblies, and other developmentally appropriate activities.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

As compared to the original bill, the substitute bill:

- modifies the description of the Holocaust;
- specifies that instruction on genocides and crimes against humanity must include every region of the world and various points in history;
- adds that, in developing and supporting implementation of best practices and guidelines, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction must collaborate with other nonprofit organizations with expertise in teaching lessons on genocide and crimes against humanity in different regions of the world and at various points in history, in addition to a Washington nonprofit organization with expertise in teaching the lessons of the Holocaust.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 9, 2024.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill contains multiple effective dates. Please see the bill.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Understanding the Holocaust is different from knowing what it is. It was about children and families that faced unprecedented hatred that wiped out entire communities. Some young people think that the Holocaust is a myth and some think that the Jewish people caused the Holocaust. Some younger people aren't aware of what happened to previous generations and so have difficulty relating to their parents and grandparents. After the attacks in Israel, there has been antisemitism reported in Washington.

Most people think there should be more education on the Holocaust in schools. The Holocaust is the most documented genocide. Holocaust education is not just about the Holocaust but pertains to genocides worldwide. All atrocities begin with hate or discrimination. Educators and students should be endowed with vocabulary and concepts to understand crimes against humanity. Genocides continue to repeat themselves and will continue to be repeated unless a stance against them is taken.

The bill requires education on the Holocaust and other genocides and crimes against humanity. The purpose of this instruction is to build students' empathy and it fits into social-emotional learning and the social studies curriculum. This education teaches what can and does happen when hatred of others goes unchecked. Many school districts are already teaching this content. Community organizations have education resources on these topics.

This bill is the culmination of decades of work with teachers, not a reaction to current events. Students should be encouraged how to ask hard questions. Students should not have to seek out the education they deserve.

(Opposed) Genocide remembrance is important. The bill names the Holocaust but not other genocides or crimes against humanity; the bill should be more inclusive. Genocides are still happening today and the survivors of these crimes against humanity should be named. It is important to educate students so that these atrocities never happen again.

It is important to work with communities of people who have experienced genocide about their other experiences. Other organizations that provide genocide education want to be included in development of the curriculum. Tax dollars should not be spent on this bill when it is possible to educate people on these topics for free.

This bill is a reaction to current events. Justice and fairness need to be provided to everyone. The government has assisted with genocide. Some war crimes were ignored by the international community until it was too late.

(Other) Washington is home to the third largest population of refugees. Storytelling about genocides falls to the survivors. Younger generations do not understand the war that their predecessors survived. Survivors can provide first-person documentation as education to all

of us.

The bill names only the Holocaust and other genocides are tacked on. The bill should ensure meaningful engagement of all because not all refugees are created equal and not all genocides are created equal. The bill should be amended to include representation from groups that have been targets of more recent genocides to show that "never again" is a current call to vigilance.

The bill should include a working group that includes more voices in the development of the curriculum. There are curricula that already exist about other genocides. Students should be mandated to learn about other genocides, and that there have been many after the Holocaust. It is best practice to consult multiple sources to get as complete of picture as possible.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Travis Couture, prime sponsor; Simone Boe, Washington Education Association; Liam Krol, The Forgotten Europe Project; Paul Regelbrugge, Holocaust Center for Humanity; Cammie Allen; Brad Payne, Family Policy Institute of Washington; and Representative Tana Senn.

(Opposed) Leslie Maxwell; and Khaled Mohamed.

(Other) Rae Levine; Nizama Djuderija, Department of Public Defense; Stephanie Ung; Sallie Shawl; and Oun Yeav.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: More than 20 persons signed in. Please see committee staff for information.