



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

TO: Representative Rob Swearingen
Members, Assembly Committee on State Affairs

FROM: Kim Vercauteren, Executive Director, Wisconsin Catholic Conference 

DATE: March 10, 2021

RE: Support for Assembly Bill 55, Holocaust and Genocide Education

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC) appreciates the opportunity to offer testimony on behalf of the Roman Catholic bishops of Wisconsin in support of Assembly Bill 55. This bill incorporates the Holocaust and other genocides into the state's model social studies standards for education and requires Holocaust and genocide instruction for certain grades at public, charter, and private schools participating in the parental choice programs.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that:

Actions deliberately contrary to the law of nations and to its universal principles are crimes, as are the orders that command such actions. Blind obedience does not suffice to excuse those who carry them out. Thus the extermination of a people, nation, or ethnic minority must be condemned as a mortal sin. One is morally bound to resist orders that command genocide. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2313)

It continues, "[e]very act of war directed to the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities or vast areas with their inhabitants is a crime against God and man, which merits firm and unequivocal condemnation." (CCC, no. 2314)

While we appreciate that the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has revised the current model academic standards to incorporate instruction on human rights, the Holocaust, and other genocides, the WCC takes this opportunity to acknowledge its support for the continued inclusion of these subjects in our state academic standards as required under AB 55.

Under the bill, a school board, independent charter school, and private school participating in a parental choice program must include instruction on the Holocaust and other genocides at least once in grades 5 to 8 and once in grades 9 to 12. While the WCC does not generally support mandates imposed upon private schools, in this instance, the subject matter is of such great importance that our duty to educate and condemn genocide compels our support for AB 55. We appreciate that this bill allows for the school to utilize discretion in developing its curriculum based on the model provided.

We urge your support for Assembly Bill 55. Thank you.