



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 153

Resolution calling upon the Department of Education to create a Jewish Heritage Day in New York City public schools.

By Council Members Abreu, Dinowitz, Restler, Menin, Schulman, Vernikov, Yeger, Kagan, Joseph, Bottcher, Ung, Avilés, De La Rosa, Brooks-Powers, Krishnan, Williams, Rivera, Sanchez, Lee, Velázquez, Gennaro, Riley, Brannan, Narcisse, Louis, Feliz, Brewer, Hudson, Won, Hanif, Hanks, Cabán, Carr and Paladino

Whereas, Hate crimes, defined by the United States (U.S.) Department of Justice as “crimes committed on the basis of the victim’s perceived or actual race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability,” are on the rise in the U.S.; and

Whereas, According to the latest Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Hate Crime Statistics report released in November 2020, 2019 had the highest level of reported hate crimes nationally in more than a decade; and

Whereas, Further, the majority of hate crimes motivated by religious bias were anti-Jewish, according to the FBI report; and

Whereas, In New York City, hate crimes also continue to grow, with a reported 76% increase in the first few months of 2022 compared to the same period last year, according to data from the New York Police Department Hate Crimes Task Force (HCTF); and

Whereas, There were 194 hate crimes in NYC between January 1 and April 10 of 2022, in comparison to the 110 hate crimes from the same dates in 2021, the HCTF report shows; and

Whereas, According to the HCTF data, crime incidents targeting Jewish people, which comprise the largest number of NYC hate crimes so far this year, increased from 28 crimes for this period last year to 86 in 2022, a rise of more than 200%; and

Whereas, Many educators and advocates maintain that schools can play an important role in helping to reduce bias in our society, as biases often develop at a young age according to *Psychology Today*; and

Whereas, Students in NYC schools learn about anti-Semitism by studying the Holocaust, the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Europeans of Jewish faith by the Nazi German regime and its allies and collaborators during World War II, which is required to be taught starting in 10th grade according to the New York State Grades 9-12 Social Studies Framework; and

Whereas, However, there is no requirement to teach about the more than 350-year history of Jewish Americans, who immigrated to this country in waves since colonial times in search of religious freedom and to escape oppression and persecution, according to the National Humanities Center; and

Whereas, Additionally, there is no formal mechanism or requirement to teach about Jewish contributions to America and the American culture; and

Whereas, Pursuant to a resolution passed unanimously by the U.S. Congress in February 2006, on April 20, 2006, then-President George W. Bush proclaimed that May would be Jewish American Heritage Month; and

Whereas, Each year since then, U.S. presidents have issued proclamations declaring May as Jewish American Heritage Month in order to raise awareness and appreciation of Jewish American contributions to this nation; and

Whereas, However, Jewish American Heritage Month is not formally celebrated by NYC public schools, nor is there much recognition or commemoration of the month anywhere in the U.S., according to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency; and

Whereas, The NYC Department of Education could designate a Jewish Heritage Day in City public schools to celebrate the positive contributions and achievements of Jewish Americans, and particularly Jewish New Yorkers, which would benefit all students by helping them to appreciate others' strengths, build empathy, and reduce implicit bias; and

Whereas, The recent rise in hate crimes reinforces how important it is to raise awareness about the

contributions and achievements of Jewish Americans as early as possible to help combat stereotypes and bias against Jewish people; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the Department of Education to create a Jewish Heritage Day in New York City public schools.

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JA
4/27/22