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**Subject: SBE Subcommittee Meeting: Education Quality Standards Rule Update Committee**

**Date:** July 25, 2022 at 2:56:54 PM GMT-4

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Dear SBE EQS Subcommittee Members Ms. Gleason, Ms. Kolbe, Mr. Lovett, Ms. Lucci, and Mr. Brown -

As a child, grandchild, niece, and cousin of Holocaust victims and fortunate survivors, as well as the president and co-founder of the Vermont Holocaust Memorial, I feel it vital to speak up regarding changes that have been instituted by the working group regarding Act 1.

The original wording and intent of the Act was to include “*groups that have been historically subject to persecution or genocide*” in defining “*ethnic groups.*” The removal of that portion of the definition by the working group fundamentally changes the scope of the act. It is imperative that students understand the distinct and diverse nature of ethnicities. To impress upon them the importance of respect and tolerance, for an appreciation of the history and contributions of a variety of ethnic groups, as well as the marginalization, discrimination and oppression faced -- all groups that have a history of persecution and genocide must be included.

Of course, I speak as a Jew. However, it must be made clear that the Jewish people are a diverse racial group which includes not only whites, but Asian, middle eastern, blacks, LGBTQ+, and others. The Jewish people have continually faced discrimination, persecution, and genocide. Eliminating a major defining clause for “*ethnic group*” that was properly, originally included, is as if to eradicate that group’s existence.

Educating about Jewish history and of their persecution and genocide, as well as that of others, offers a strong defense against future denial and distortion, which “feeds on and spreads antisemitism and jeopardises the understanding of one of the most tragic and violent episodes in the history of humanity: the genocide of 6 million Jews by Nazi Germany, its allies and collaborators... Antisemitism, Holocaust denial and distortion, and any form of religious

bigotry and hatred are a seismograph. The more they rattle our world, the greater the cracks to the foundations of our common humanity.” [[UNESCO “History under attack” 2022](#)]

As part of the last generation to have a personal connection to victims and survivors of the worst genocide in recent history, I respectfully request that your committee reinstate the definition of “*ethnic group*” to include “*groups that have been historically subject to persecution or genocide*” as originally intended in Act 1 as passed.

Thank you for your consideration and support.

***Debora A. Steiner***

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