Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

March 24, 2023

Chairman Mario Diaz-Balart
Subcommittee On State, Foreign
Operations, and Related Programs
House Appropriations Committee
HT-2 The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Ranking Member Barbara Lee
Subcommittee On State, Foreign
Operations, and Related Programs
House Appropriations Committee
1036 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Diaz-Balart and Ranking Member Lee,

As you consider the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you provide $1.5 million for the U.S. Department of State's Office of the Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues (SEHI).

The monumental human tragedy of the Holocaust—the systematic murder of six million Jews by the Nazis and their allies—is one of history's most painstakingly examined and well-documented genocides. Nevertheless, in the decades since World War II, Holocaust deniers, historical revisionists, and antisemites have sought to minimize the atrocity, undermine the legacy of the lives lost, or rewrite history to escape blame. At the same time, and often to a similar effect, Holocaust trivialization is increasingly entering the mainstream. Public figures have undermined the memory and magnitude of the Holocaust by co-opting its imagery, making exaggerated Nazi comparisons and Hitler references, and other similarly egregious behavior. Doing so not only coarsens our discourse, it diminishes the horror of the Holocaust and undermines efforts to ensure its lessons are universally learned.

As you know, SEHI is crucial to the fight against these efforts and to push back on antisemitism globally. The office was established to develop and implement U.S. policy to return Holocaust-era assets to their rightful owners, secure compensation for Nazi-era wrongs, and ensure that the Holocaust is remembered and commemorated appropriately. Appropriately, they also lead the U.S. delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), the 34-member intergovernmental organization founded to advance Holocaust education, research, and remembrance worldwide. These are particularly important roles in the current environment, and their work is critical to stemming the tide of these rising trends.

We have a shared responsibility to remind the public of what happens when evil remains unchecked. The best way to memorialize the victims and to teach the lessons from this monumental human tragedy is through education—not through inappropriate contemporary analogies. The lessons of the Holocaust remain relevant and significant, including the dangers of silence, the consequences of indifference, and the responsibility to protect the vulnerable.

Maintaining the current funding level will allow SEHI to advance its mission in combating Holocaust distortion and denial, pursuing justice for Holocaust survivors, and promoting historically accurate Holocaust remembrance, research, and education around the world. Accordingly, we strongly urge you to maintain appropriations of $1.5 million for the Office of the Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues in the FY 2024 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
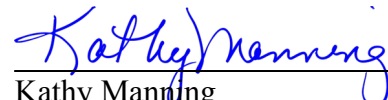
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Member of Congress

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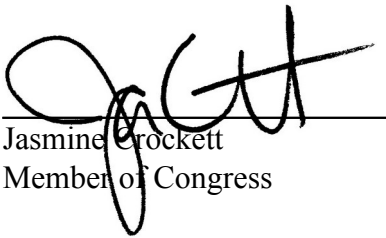Nikema Williams
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