

## **Communal Letter to National Education Association President Becky Pringle**

Dear President Pringle,

We are writing to express our deep concerns about the growing level of antisemitic activity within teachers' unions, particularly since the Hamas terrorist attacks in Israel on October 7, 2023. Passage of New Business Item (NBI) 39 at the National Education Association (NEA) Representative Assembly this past weekend, which shockingly calls for the boycott of the Anti-Defamation League, is just the latest example of open hostility toward Jewish educators, students and families coming from national and local teachers' unions and their members.

Among the undersigned organizations are those that represent the depth and diversity of Jewish life across the United States. We have heard directly from NEA members who have shared their experiences ranging from explicit and implicit antisemitism within the union to a broader pattern of insensitivity toward legitimate concerns of Jewish members – including at the recently concluded Representative Assembly. We are also deeply troubled by a broader pattern of union activity over the past 20 months that has targeted or alienated Jewish members and the wider Jewish community. A few illustrative examples are included in the attached addendum and underscore the urgent need for NEA leadership to speak out and take meaningful action.

We understand that NBI 39 passed at the NEA Representative Assembly and has been referred to the NEA Executive Committee for further consideration. As you know, NBI 39 would bar NEA and its members from using or promoting any educational material or data published by ADL, a respected national organization founded in 1913 with a decade's long history of fighting bigotry, bias, and discrimination.

While we recognize that NEA has its own internal procedures, we call on you to do everything in your power, as president of the union, to ensure that NBI 39 is rejected. ADL has been a national leader in anti-hate education in K-12 schools for decades and is widely recognized as one of the country's foremost experts on antisemitism. Although NBI 39 does not explicitly say so, we understand that much of the underlying concern prompting this resolution is directed at ADL's Holocaust education materials. That reality makes this proposal especially disturbing. This is precisely the kind of education that is vital not only to combat antisemitism, but also to fighting hatred and intolerance of all kinds. The effort to exclude ADL's voice from educational spaces at a time of skyrocketing antisemitism — including in K-12 classrooms — speaks volumes about the climate within NEA that allowed this measure to pass, and the lack of understanding, if not outright hostility, behind it.

We are particularly alarmed by reports that Jewish teachers who spoke out against the resolution at the Representative Assembly were harassed and shouted down during the proceedings. It is our belief that the goal of those who introduced NBI 39 is to marginalize mainstream Jewish voices within this country's public school systems and to limit the

ability of educators to address the growing threat of antisemitism with their students. In both content and context, NBI 39 represents a direct attack on Jewish educators, Jewish students, the broader Jewish community, and all who stand against antisemitism.

We urge you to take immediate action, including:

1. Issue a strong condemnation of the antisemitism within the NEA.
2. Outline a plan of action to address antisemitism within your national and affiliate state and local NEA chapters.
3. Reject NBI 39.
4. Reject any effort to use an educator's support for the existence of Israel as a means to attack their identity.

The Jewish community is facing a historic crisis of antisemitism not seen in generations. ADL's recently published 2024 Audit of Antisemitic Incidents tracked 9,354 incidents across the United States. Since the events of October 7, there has been a dramatic spike in incidents across nearly every sector of American life. An increase in antisemitic incidents in our K-12 schools has been especially concerning, with 1,162 and 860 incidents reported in 2023 and 2024, respectively. Reports of Jewish children being called "baby killers," taunted with Hitler and Holocaust jokes, and exposed to swastika vandalism at school have become frighteningly normal.

Given this highly concerning landscape, we are especially disturbed by the volume of reports by Jewish K-12 teachers regarding antisemitic activity happening within their unions. Hateful resolutions and rhetoric have left Jewish educators feeling hurt, isolated, and abandoned by their unions. Those educators who have spoken out against such actions have often faced hostility and ostracization and suddenly feel excluded and unwelcome.

We are available to assist in this work, but the NEA leadership must demonstrate a sincere commitment to addressing the issue, make clear that there will be no tolerance for antisemitism in its ranks, and recognize the harm that its inaction to date has caused to member teachers and the students and families your members serve.

Sincerely,

## Addendum

### Selected Examples of Recent Incidents within and by Teachers' Unions Targeting and/or Alienating Jewish Community

- October 2023, The Oakland Education Association (OEA) released a statement calling for "an end to the occupation of Palestine" and attributing much of the blame for the current conflict on Israeli's "apartheid" government and "the Israeli government leaders [espousing] genocidal rhetoric and policies against the people of Palestine." OEA members were directed to materials advising educators on, among other things, "teaching about Palestine in situations where pushback from Zionist parents" is likely.
- November 2023, Minneapolis teachers' union blamed 'apartheid' Israel for the war with Hamas, sparking outrage.
- Fall 2023, In the immediate wake of October 7, Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) passed a resolution that appeared to blame Israel entirely for the conflict and condemned Israel's response as a "genocidal war" against the Palestinians.
- Fall 2023, MTA resolved to create a set of teaching resources about "Israel/Palestine" for use by teachers and their students. The resource list, published in December 2024, offers a biased list of anti-Israel resources, which includes some overtly antisemitic material. At a hearing of the Massachusetts Special Commission on Combatting Antisemitism some of the concerning materials within these resources were spotlighted, including, for example, the image of a Jewish star made out of dollar bills and a children's book that referred to Zionists as bullies who stole land.
- Fall 2023-present, Jewish teachers in the MTA report they have been being bullied and harassed at union meetings when they speak up against particular resolutions that they deem harmful or biased against Jews or Israel.
- September 2024, Debby Pope, a longtime educator and activist in the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) whom Mayor Johnson also appointed to the body, shared a post on X in September reading "Zionists are not welcome in Chicago."
- October 2024, when San Francisco Unified School District held mandatory antisemitism training for staff at four high schools, the teachers' union, United Educators of San Francisco, said it will support any educator who decided to forgo the mandatory training.
- January 2025, a Union representing 30,000 CUNY faculty and staff passed a resolution to divest from Israel.
- March 2025, seven Los Angeles teachers filed a lawsuit against the United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) alleging a history of antisemitic actions by the union and unconstitutional forced association.
- March 2025, UTLA voted to urge the Los Angeles Unified School District to drop the ADL as a partner in professional development and to reject promoting or adopting

ADL curriculum in LA schools. The UTLA House of Representatives also voted to object to the UCLA administration's response to anti-Israel protests on campus and to reject partnering with the Jewish Federation on antisemitism training.

- Spring 2025, UTLA urged the Los Angeles School District to effectively ban Echoes and Reflections, a curriculum developed by Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, the USC Shoah Foundation and ADL to teach educators about the Holocaust, as well as instill in them the confidence to teach this difficult subject.