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Floor Alert

May 21, 2018

To: Members of the California State Assembly

From: The Jewish Public Affairs Committee (JPAC)

Subject: AJR 35 (Levine) Polish Legislation: Holocaust Speech – Support

The Jewish Public Affairs Committee of California (JPAC), is pleased to support AJR 35 (Levine) presented by the California Legislative Jewish Caucus. JPAC is the largest single-state coalition of Jewish organizations in the nation, representing Jewish communities and nonprofit organizations throughout California. Our membership is comprised of Jewish Federations, Jewish Community Relations Councils, Jewish Family Service agencies, and many Jewish community organizations, and we advocate on behalf of broader community interests in California.

The bill in question, which was approved by the lower house of the Polish parliament on January 26, 2018, the day before International Holocaust Day, amends the Institute of National Remembrance law, and makes it a crime, punishable by up to three years in prison, to use statements suggesting the Polish nation or the Polish state bear any responsibility for crimes against humanity committed by Nazi Germany and grossly diminishing the responsibility of the actual perpetrators of those crimes. As representatives of the California Jewish community, we at JPAC fear that this is an attempt to diminish freedom to research, discuss, and teach about those instances when Jews suffered greatly not at the hands of German Nazi perpetrators but Polish neighbors. We hope that Poland will change this harmful legislation and return on the path of an honest and in-depth examination of the full history of the Holocaust as it took place in Nazi-occupied Poland. As Abraham Foxman wrote in his recent op-ed, "As survivors are passing away, as anti-Semitism is resurging, understanding the Holocaust, including how deeply embedded anti-Semitism in places like Poland contributed to the environment which led to the murder of six million, is more important than ever."

We applaud the Jewish Caucus for vocalizing opposition to Poland's decision to pass this law. For these reasons, JPAC strongly supports AJR 35 (Levine).

We respectfully ask for your "Aye" vote on AJR 35 (Levine).