

PROPOSED RESOLUTION NO. 119 -2021

**A RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH THE SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE
TO COMBAT ANTISEMITISM**

WHEREAS, there has recently been a shocking upsurge in incidents of antisemitic violence and hate across the country, including in the New York area; and

WHEREAS, there is a long and lamentable history of Jewish people being persecuted, vilified and falsely scapegoated for social, economic and political problems for which they bear no responsibility; and

WHEREAS, the scourge of antisemitism has plagued our civilization for over a millennium, reaching a horrible crescendo in the mid-twentieth century but continuing to recur on a constant basis; and

WHEREAS, history further teaches us that to disregard, excuse or justify antisemitism is to encourage its spread and can lead to catastrophic results; and

WHEREAS, it is the judgement of the Legislature that all such hateful acts are abhorrent, un-American, and an offense against basic human decency; and

WHEREAS, it is incumbent upon the Legislature to take all available legislative steps necessary and proper to protect society and particularly our Jewish friends and neighbors from acts of persecution, hatred and intolerance and to promote education and public awareness of the persistent problem of antisemitic hate; and

WHEREAS, this Legislature strongly believes that it is imperative that this body exercise its lawmaking and oversight power to combat antisemitic hate with all means at its disposal, consistent with the law; and

WHEREAS, in order to exercise such legislative authority in an informed and responsible manner, it is advisable to promptly and expeditiously convene a special legislative task force to hold hearings, engage with governmental and community leaders and collect information on the current extent of antisemitism including acts of antisemitic harassment, violence and vandalism in our County and our region, such task force to be composed of a diverse group of legislators, clergy and leaders of the Jewish community and other community leaders; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the exercise of lawmaking authority and oversight, this legislative body recognizes that it is imperative to use our leadership role to bridge cultural, social, and religious divides within our County through education, community outreach, and activities to promote values of tolerance, respect, and empathy so that the diverse residents who call Nassau their home can live and thrive in an environment that is conducive to their well-being; and

WHEREAS, this Legislature believes that presenting the history and contributions of Jewish people to our society, especially to young people within our diverse community, can be a highly effective means of quelling antisemitism by dispelling misinformation and negative rhetoric; and

WHEREAS, as lawmakers, this Legislature acknowledges the great contribution of jurists such as Benjamin N. Cardozo, a New York native of Jewish descent who became chief judge of the New York Court of Appeals and a revered justice of the U.S. Supreme Court and his accomplishments can serve as a source of learning and inspiration for eradicating antisemitism and promoting public policy as a tool for enlightening and improving society; NOW THEREFORE BE IT

RESOLVED, that there is hereby established a legislative task force to be known as the “Special Legislative Task Force to Combat Antisemitism”; and be it further

RESOLVED, that such task force shall consist of three legislative members appointed by the Presiding Officer and three legislative members appointed by the Minority Leader; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the legislative members shall select five additional members from the Nassau County community to serve as non-legislative members of the task force who possess documented backgrounds in opposing antisemitism, intolerance, and community leadership; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the County Executive or her designee shall also be an ex officio advisory member of the task force; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the legislative members of the task force shall select one of their number to serve as chair of the task force; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the task force shall hold one or more public hearings to engage with appropriate governmental and community leaders, law enforcement personnel, clergy, members of academia, and other knowledgeable individuals and institutions to collect information and public input regarding the current extent of antisemitism including acts of antisemitic harassment, violence, and vandalism in our County and our region; and be it further

RESOLVED, that there shall be a public comment period of no less than sixty days during which the task force will accept written commentary from the public concerning their experiences with antisemitism and suggestions and proposals on methods to raise public awareness of and combat antisemitism in all its manifestations; and be it further

RESOLVED, after due deliberation and considering the data, information and public input collected during its proceedings, the task force shall submit recommendations for appropriate legislative action to the Presiding Officer and Minority Leader, such recommendations to be submitted no later than International Holocaust Remembrance Day, January 27, 2022; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the task force shall coordinate and sponsor with the help of stakeholders including educators, community leaders, and religious leaders a videoconferencing “Virtual Youth Roundtable Against Antisemitism” that shall be known as “Cardozo Day” to commemorate the jurist while engaging Nassau County youths to explore the ways the law and public policy can help to diminish bias and insensitivity; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the “Virtual Youth Roundtable Against Antisemitism” shall include the following: 1. An opportunity for the task force to introduce itself to the Nassau County community and conduct outreach to youth groups and organizations for individuals and/or groups to sign up to participate in the videoconferencing program; 2. Online access and use of social media platforms for promotion, registration, and to conduct the videoconferencing program; 3. A program featuring speakers to address antisemitism and ways to educate participants about the origins and myths behind antisemitism; 4. A moderator to take questions over the videoconferencing platform to monitor constructive dialogue and remove any potential negative comments; 5. Examples of ways to promote respect, tolerance, and empathy in a diverse society; and be it further

RESOLVED, that carrying out its responsibilities under this resolution, the task force shall be guided by the Working Definition of Antisemitism adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance as follows: Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities; and be it further resolved

RESOLVED, that it is hereby determined, pursuant to the provisions of the State Environmental Quality Review Act, 8 N.Y.E.C.L., section 0101 et seq. and its implementing regulations, Part 617 of 6 N.Y.C.R.R. and section 1611 of the County Government Law of Nassau County, that the adoption of this local law is a “Type II” Action within the meaning of Section 617.5(c) of 6 N.Y.C.R.R., and, accordingly, is of a class of actions which do not have a significant effect on the environment; and no further review is required.