

**From:** Franz, Isabelle R.

**Sent:** Thursday, August 15, 2019 1:50 PM

**To:** Ethnic Studies Kenneth McDonald kierra paul

**Cc:** Alejo, Luis

**Subject:** Public Comments on Draft Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Hello,

Please see the attached comments on the draft Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum from Monterey County Supervisor Luis A. Alejo. Please forward to State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond, the State Board of Education, the CDE Instructional Quality Commission, and the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Advisory Committee. If you have any questions, feel free to call our office at 831-755-5011 or send an email to [franzir@co.monterey.ca.us](mailto:franzir@co.monterey.ca.us).

Thank you,

Executive Assistant

Office of Monterey County Supervisor Luis A. Alejo

District One

# MONTEREY COUNTY



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS • Salinas, CA 93901 LUIS A. ALEJO, SUPERVISOR •  
District One • Chief of Staff, Linda J. Gonzalez Telephone: • Email:

## SUBMITTED VIA EMAIL TO

August 15, 2019

California Department of Education  
State Superintendent Tony Thurmond  
1430 N Street, Sacramento, CA 94814

Re: Public Comments on Draft Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Dear State Superintendent Thurmond and the California Department of Education,

As the author of Assembly Bill 2016 and co-sponsor of Assembly Bill 331 (Medina), I am writing to provide comments on the draft Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. Since 2002, I've advocated to standardize ethnic studies in California high schools and making such a course a graduation requirement. As an Assembly Fellow in 2002, I drafted the first bill on ethnic studies, Assembly Bill 2001, for my then-boss, Assemblymember Manny Diaz (D-San Jose). Later, as a State Assemblymember during 2014-16, I drafted several more bills with the same goal. Fortunately, in 2016, Governor Jerry Brown signed a portion of my AB 2016 to create the first statewide model ethnic studies curriculum in the nation.

Last year, I was a co-sponsor of AB 2772 by Assemblymember Jose Medina (D-Riverside) to make ethnic studies a high school graduation requirement statewide. Although Governor Brown vetoed it, we introduced AB 331 this year with the goal of making California the first in the nation to approve a statewide graduation requirement under our new Governor Gavin Newsom. State Superintendent Tony Thurmond endorsed the bill and came to testify in support.

From the beginning, I've strategically and intentionally sought to obtain a wide range of support for the legislation by being inclusive and respectful of a wide range of ethnic and racial groups and obtaining bi-partisan support. For instance, I sought out and added Assemblymember Katcho Achadjian (R-San Luis Obispo) as a joint-author of AB 2016, along with several other racially diverse legislators.

Other states have also been leading the way in implementing ethnic studies in a bipartisan manner. In April 2017, for example, Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb, a Republican, signed legislation requiring all Indiana high schools to offer an ethnic studies course each year beginning in July 2017. Oregon Governor Kate Brown, a Democrat, followed in June 2017, with a law to require ethnic studies in the curriculum of all its K-12 schools, beginning in 2021.

This draft, in its current form, is in need of several major revisions in key areas and we now have to get the curriculum right before we move the pending legislation AB 331 forward. There is no reason why, in the interdisciplinary, rich, and wide field of ethnic studies scholarship, we should get bogged down on a few concepts, conflicts, omissions or terminology. I also believe that CDE staff and consultants had an opportunity to make edits of the most controversial parts of the draft model curriculum before putting it out for public comment, but failed to do so. Those actions could have avoided the controversy that has ensued since its release.

Let's also remember that the model curriculum was intended for an introductory ethnic studies class for high school students, not a graduate-level seminar course. In my legislation, I always encouraged school districts to augment ethnic

studies courses and even cater courses for their diverse student populations needs. I have advocated that although ethnic studies has traditionally centered on Chicano Latino, Black, Native American and Asian American Studies, school districts should be encouraged to have courses and supplemental curriculum on additional diverse groups such as Jewish Americans, Arab Americans, Armenian Americans, and Irish Americans, to name a few. This approach embraces many diverse populations in shaping a broader and heightened framework of implementing ethnic studies on a statewide basis in California schools.

We now have an opportunity to make needed revisions and edits, put it out to the public again, and make another round edits before putting forward a final product before the State Board of Education early next year. We must get it right for our students. There is also plenty of existing high school ethnic studies curricula available from other schools districts that we could pull from including, but not limited, to San Francisco Unified, Sacramento City Unified, or Los Angeles Unified. Any adopted model ethnic studies curriculum should be revised and enhanced over time.

But let's be clear, making ethnic studies an integral part of our high schools makes sense in California as our state is home to the largest and most diverse student population in the nation. Students of color account for 76 percent of the population in our public schools and California students speak 90 different languages. Given California's growing diversity, it is especially important that students learn about the various racial and ethnic groups in our state and their shared American identity.

Unfortunately, only 17,357 of California's 1.7 million high school students, or 1 percent, had access to an ethnic studies course in 2016-17. While our state now offers bachelors, master's and doctorate courses and degrees in ethnic studies at our most prestigious colleges and universities, California has just not come far along when it comes to our high schools. California can and must do better. That is our overall goal and we must remember to keep our eyes on the prize.

If California is serious about preparing its students to succeed in diverse university and workforce environments and for jobs in a global economy, it must provide its students with the knowledge of the diverse people who make up our great state and the rest of our world.

Let's all work to ensure that this model curriculum can build the broadest support and be one that we can be proud of as diverse Californians.

Sincerely,



**LUIS A. ALEJO**

Monterey County Supervisor, District 1  
Former State Assemblymember, 30th District  
Former Chair, California Latino Legislative Caucus

Cc: State Board of Education  
COE Instructional Quality Commission  
Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Advisory Committee  
Assemblymember Jose Medina  
Ethnic Studies Now Coalition