

CALIFORNIA REGIONS

CENTRAL PACIFIC
720 Market Street, Suite 800
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 981-3500
san-francisco@adl.org
SUE BEVINS
Regional Director
LINDA HORODAS
Chair, Regional Board
GILBERT R. SEROTA
Interim Chair, Civil Rights

LOS ANGELES
10495 Santa Monica Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90025
(310) 446-8000
LA@adl.org
AMANDA F. SUSSKIND
Regional Director
SCOTT J. HARRIS
Chair, Regional Board
BRENT SOKOL
ERIC KINGSLEY
Co-Chairs, Civil Rights

ORANGE COUNTY/LONG BEACH
1201 Dove Street, Suite 550
Newport Beach, CA 92660
(949) 679-3737
orange-county@adl.org
PETER LEVI
Regional Director
JOSE GRUSIDIN
Chair, Regional Board
MICHAEL ROSEN
Chair, Civil Rights

SAN DIEGO
4950 Murphy Canyon Road, Suite 250
San Diego, CA 92123
(619) 565-6896
san-diego@adl.org
TAMMY GELLES
Regional Director
ELAINE FEUER-BARTON
Chair, Regional Board
ADAM ROSENTHAL
Chair, Civil Rights Committee

SANTA BARBARA
1528 Chapala Street, Suite 301
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 564-6670
santa-barbara@adl.org
CYNTHY SILVERMAN
Regional Director
MARINA STEPHENS
Chair, Regional Board
JASON EHRN
DANIEL MEISEL
Co-Chairs, Civil Rights

NANCY J. APPEL
California Legislative Director

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Vice President, Civil Rights
MELISSA GARLICK
Civil Rights National Counsel
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National Policy Counsel
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CEO and National Director
KEN JACOBSON
Deputy National Director



August 6, 2019

By email only

Soomin Chao

Chair, Instructional Quality Commission

California Department of Education

1430 N Street

Sacramento, CA 95814-5901

ethnicstudies@cde.ca.gov

RE: Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Dear Chairwoman Chao:

We write to share our alarm and concern over the current version of the state's Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC). We urge the Instructional Quality Commission (IQC) to make substantial revisions to the curriculum to ensure it meets the goals of the ESMC's authorizing statute AB 2016 (Chapter 327 of the Statutes of 2016) to "prepar[e] pupils to be global citizens with an appreciation for the contributions of multiple cultures."

ADL is a leading anti-hate organization that was founded in 1913 in response to an escalating climate of anti-Semitism and bigotry. Today, ADL is the first call when acts of anti-Semitism occur and continues to fight all forms of hate. A global leader in exposing extremism, delivering anti-bias education and fighting hate online, ADL's ultimate goal is a world in which no group or individual suffers from bias, discrimination or hate.

ADL is on record supporting AB 331, Assemblymember Jose Medina's bill requiring completion of a semester course in Ethnic Studies for California high school students. We wrote the following in our letters of support:

As a leading provider of anti-bias education, ADL's A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE® Institute recognizes that attitudes and beliefs affect actions, and that each of us can have an impact on others, and ultimately, on our communities. Adding ethnic studies to California's high school curriculum will, among other things, promote respect among students as they learn about the diverse histories and contributions to our nation of their peers.

However, as supporters of the initiative, we were shocked by the proposed ESMC's manifest indifference, and even hostility, to the American Jewish experience and community. The curriculum erases American Jewish history by failing to include Jews in a meaningful way, and it neglects any discussion of anti-Semitism.¹ Further, it incorporates harmful anti-Jewish stereotypes in its completely inappropriate and biased criticism of Israel in a curriculum intended to focus on American ethnic groups.²

Jewish identity encompasses not just a connection to a faith tradition; it is also an ethnic and cultural identification. Jews are a distinct and diverse American ethnic group



deserving fair and respectful inclusion in any Ethnic Studies curriculum. The ESMC as it is currently drafted, however, fails to impart these basic lessons.

We note that ADL is far from the only organization expressing its concerns about the treatment of Jews in the ESMC, and in particular we draw your attention to the detailed comment already submitted to you by the Jewish Public Affairs Committee, Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa, and every member of the Legislative Jewish Caucus. This broad range of critical Jewish voices should demonstrate to you and your fellow IQC members that major revisions to the ESMC's treatment of the Jewish community are necessary.

California's high school students will benefit from a pedagogically sound course in Ethnic Studies. As AB 1616 states, "the state's educational standards should be guided by core values of equity, inclusiveness, and universally high expectations." We ask that you implement all necessary revisions to meet this standard by including Jewish culture and history, teaching about anti-Semitism, and avoiding irrelevant and inflammatory polemics relating to Israel.

Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to providing you with any further input you may request from us.

Sincerely,

Nancy J. Appel
California Legislative Director

cc:

The Honorable Tony Thurmond, State Superintendent of Public Instruction
The Honorable Jose Medina, Assembly member
The Honorable Ben Allen, State Senator, IQC member
The Honorable Jessie Gabriel, Assembly member
The Honorable Patrick O'Donnell, Assembly member
Jamie Callahan, Deputy Cabinet Secretary, Office of the Governor
Karen Stapf Walters, Executive Director of the California State Board of Education
Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond, President of the California State Board of Education
Dr. Stephanie Gregson, Director, Instructional Quality Commission
Sarah Neville-Morgan, Deputy Superintendent
Dr. Kenneth McDonald, Lead Consultant for the 2020 Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

¹ See California State Department of Education, *Draft 2020 Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Glossary and Bibliography*, (2019) ("ESMC") (containing no mention of anti-Semitism).

² See *ESMC Glossary and Bibliography* at 2, lines 30-40 (inclusion of anti-Israel "Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS)"); *ESMC Chapter 2*, at 242, lines 5157-61 (describing founding of Israel in a politically biased manner); at 268-69, lines 5802-03 (using anti-Semitic trope of Jewish control of the media to baselessly accuse Israel of colonizing land).