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Letter to California State Board of Education from
Modesto City Schools Elected Officials

August 21, 2020

Dr. Linda. Darling-Hammond
State Board President
California State Board of Education
1430 N Street, Room 5111
Sacramento, Ca 95814

Dear Dr. Darling-Hammond

We write as a statewide coalition of school board trustees, superintendents, elected officials, administrators, teachers and advocates. With a unified voice, we oppose the July 30, 2020 Draft Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum as released by the California Department of Education.

Although we support the draft's focus on the four foundational disciplines: African American, Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x, Native American and Indigenous, and Asian American and Pacific Islander studies, the July 2020 draft woefully underrepresents or excludes a broad array of communities across each of these disciplines. The current draft no longer includes course outlines and lesson plans on Cambodian Americans, Pacific Islanders, Arab Americans, and Asian Americans (as a pan-ethnic group) that were included in the June 2019 ESMC Draft. In addition, Resistance Against Mass Incarceration: The Attica Uprising lesson was removed from African American Studies and the Context of Oppression and Struggle and Indian Land: Purpose, Politics, and Practice of Land Acknowledgment lessons were removed from Native American Studies, erasing lessons on Native Californians and Indigenous peoples.

While we acknowledge that the June 2019 Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Draft needed some revisions (see Appendix), no groups and course outlines that were a part of the original draft should have been removed during the revision process. During this era of xenophobia, violence, and hatred, it is not the time for the exclusion of any communities of color already presented in the draft. In fact, this period underlines why we need the guiding values and principles of Ethnic Studies across our state and nation. One of the strengths of Ethnic Studies is that while it is necessarily centered on people of color, it is designed to uplift all students and to benefit everyone with the knowledge of what race is, what racism is, and how both race and racism structure American life.

We maintain that the African American Studies unit, the Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies unit and the Native American and Indigenous Studies unit are all categorically insufficient to assist teachers in building Ethnic Studies courses. The absence of existing sample course outlines and



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lesson plans in the July 2020 Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum draft -- on African American, Arab Americans, Asian Americans (as a pan-ethnic group), Cambodian Americans, Native Americans, and Pacific Islanders -- is exclusionary. Indeed, it is ironic to create an “Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies” unit and to not include the Pacific Islander course outline in that unit. It is to California’s detriment to lose the richness and diversity of experiences of [Black, Indigenous, and people of color](#) in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.

We advocate that removed groups and course outlines be returned to the ESMC draft, revisions be made to further inclusion, and most importantly, a model curriculum be approved by March 2021 so that the work of incorporating ethnic studies into K-12 curriculum can proceed statewide. By introducing Ethnic Studies content as early as elementary school, students will be able to develop their skills about race over time, just as students develop their math and language skills over time. Future generations of Americans will have the race skills necessary to have positive interracial interactions and friendships, engage in difficult race related conversations, and work collaboratively to dismantle systemic racism.

At every juncture in American history, we have faced watershed moments for racial justice. *Mendez, et al v. Westminster* and *Brown v. Board of Education* offered a bold vision: to facilitate the entry of Mexican American and Black students into all-white schools and to diversify K-12 public education. Shortly after the Supreme Court decision was handed, a massive resistance and intense social backlash delayed and subverted the promise of *Brown*. School districts persisted as segregated institutions across the 20th century throughout the United States.

As school board members, administrators, and elected officials, we are adamant to steer the course of Ethnic Studies in K-12 public education along equity in the new decade ahead. Ethnic Studies afford us all the opportunity to be champions of racial justice in the classroom. We look forward to embracing and empowering the global citizens in California’s youth.

Sincerely,



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Stanislaus County

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Appendix

Initial Draft of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (June 2019):

- [Chapter 1](#)
- [Chapter 2](#) ***
- [Chapter 3](#)
- [Chapter 4](#)
- [Chapter 5](#)

Second Draft of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (July 31, 2020):

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/cc/cd/aug2020iqcagenda.asp>

- [Attachment 1: Staff Proposed Edits to the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum](#)
- [Attachment 2: Summary of Public Comment Received](#)
- [Attachment 3: The Model Curriculum](#)
- [Attachment 4: Chapter 1--Introduction and Overview](#)
- [Attachment 5: Chapter 2--District Implementation Guidance](#)
- [Attachment 6: Chapter 3--Instructional Guidance for K-12 Education](#)
- [Attachment 7: Chapter 4--Bibliography](#)
- [Attachment 8: Appendix A--UC-Approved Course Outlines](#)
- [Attachment 9: Appendix B--Sample Lessons and Topics](#) ***
- [Attachment 10: Appendix C--Lesson Resources](#)

*** Course outlines and lesson plans that districts can use as guidance for creating their own Ethnic Studies courses that reflect the student demographics in their communities. The course outlines and lesson plans are compliant to state-adopted content standards in history-social science, English language arts, and English language development.