

From: Ilene Abrams

Sent: Thursday, February 6, 2020 8:48 AM

To: Jessica Costa

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Save ethnic studies – don't shut out Arab-American experience

Dear California Department of Education Jessica Costa,

I'm a constituent of yours and deeply concerned with reports that Arab American Studies may be cut from California's Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC), under the false premise of it not being within the four racialized groups of Ethnic Studies.

The field's leaders of color, including the Association of Asian American Studies, Asian American Studies Department Chairs, and the Save CA Ethnic Studies Coalition – are insisting Arab American Studies belongs in the curriculum, and that it remain.

As is evident in the spirit of AB2016 legislation, the California Department of Education must respect communities of color, and have deference to Ethnic Studies professors and practitioners of color for this project.

Efforts to undermine or water-down any critical components of the draft, and of Ethnic Studies as a field must be rejected.

I know you are well-aware of the targeted attacks on Arabs and Muslims by the Trump administration, and the demonization of the struggle of migrants and people of color throughout the United States. As a sanctuary state, California should continue to be a counterweight against that trend – not serve as a stamp of approval.

As a Jew, I feel that it is especially important to include Arab-American Studies in any Ethnic Studies program so that students can learn the truth about the history of the Middle East. Members of my family were killed in the Holocaust. Arabs and Muslims have become the "other" and ostracized and discriminated against in the U.S., just as Jews became the "other" in Germany and other places in Europe. Educating our young people is critical to ending discrimination and learning empathy. I urge you to support the inclusion of Arab-American Studies in the planned Ethnic Studies program.

Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Ilene Abrams  
Oakland, CA