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To: Ethnic Studies
Subject: [EXTERNAL] CA ethnic studies

Hello,

We are Californians who emigrated from the Former Soviet Union and its historic client states. We escaped a Marxist-socialist system and its associated tyranny and oppression.

Never could we have imagined that, decades later, the same ideology and concepts that we escaped, would show up in, of all places... the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. While we commend the removal of explicit, outrageous specifics in Draft 2, we note with disappointment that the overt Marxist doctrine still exists in the values and principles, and is woven throughout the curriculum framework.

We understand that most Americans' jaws do not drop when they read in both drafts of the ESMC that students are to "connect ourselves to past and contemporary resistance movements that struggle for social justice on the global and local levels to ensure a truer democracy." But our jaws do drop – because "truer democracy" is the term that Karl Marx and his followers use for Communism and the end of private property. It is very different from saying that the goal is "a more just society," or as Americans say, "a more perfect union." This deeply problematic reference is not simply a random phrase but a guiding principle and desired outcome for the entire curriculum.

We are dumbfounded by a curriculum (in both drafts) that consistently elevates Socialism, Marxism, and Communism as THE way students are encouraged to become socially responsible. Based on this ideology, in the first draft, resistance is described not as a range of actions that can affect social change, but specifically as "a move towards dismantling a system," and is mentioned 112 times. "Revolution" is mentioned over 50 times.

Communism is portrayed as benign even when connected to Pol Pot and the Killing Fields. (In reality, Pol Pot was the head of the brutal Khmer Rouge Communist Party, responsible for the massacre of one-quarter, or about 2 million, of their own people.)

We see nothing in the current version that protects against this type of propaganda – dogma that emerges naturally from the current explicit guidelines of this curriculum. Indeed, Capitalism is still described in Draft 2 as a "form of power and oppression," alongside "patriarchy," "racism," and "white supremacy." Given that Draft 1 illustrated perfectly the teachings that the guidelines result in, it is unacceptable to keep these same guidelines in the ESMC.

Furthermore, while many of the specific examples are removed from the text of the second draft, we note that others have simply been moved to the footnotes and hyperlinks. (For example, nonviolent black leaders of the civil rights movement are looked down upon, due to being "passive" and "docile," as described in a hyperlink of Appendix B.)

However, some of the specifics that emerge from the flawed, dogmatic framework are still in Draft 2 and range from the ludicrous to the insidious. Ludicrous: "While we believe that individuals, families, and communities can take concrete steps to decolonize their diets..., we recognize that a true solution to this problem will entail radical structural changes..." Insidious: Repeated references to the Third World Liberation Front, whose very name was based on the Vietnamese National Liberation Front (Viet Cong), the armed Communist political organization in South Vietnam and Cambodia. And more obvious: lists of textbooks by Marxist authors as the materials for various courses in Appendix A. (e.g., Gramsci, Parsons, Hobsbawm)

We are well familiar with an educational system that proselytizes a specific political dogma, teaching students what, not how, to think. It does not end well. In our first-hand experience, it grooms, conditions and converts impressionable minds to an ideology in service of a political agenda. Intolerance, violence, and loss of freedom inevitably follow.

Possibly most chilling of this déjà vu experience for us is that the activists pushing their agenda in the ESMC try to squash any opposition by labeling critique of their one-sided approach as "racist." Here too, we're familiar with this tactic of responding to "wrong-think" by broad swipes that obliterate critical thinking.

We struggled to escape the regime that forced groupthink and neo-Marxist ideology in the Former Soviet Union. The American system is not perfect and should be examined critically. But we came to this country to give our children the freedom to use their own minds, the opportunity to build on understanding, and to work towards bettering this world by socially responsible, non-violent means.

We urge you to issue a new type of curriculum, based on principles that encourage critical thinking, rather than proselytizing. Please help our children grow to be the free-thinking, compassionate, courageous adults our nation deserves.

Sincerely, Lara