

Dear Commissioners,

First, I want to express my support for excellent Ethnic Studies teaching in our schools. I think it is extremely important. But, it needs to have clear goals and be well designed. Unfortunately, the current draft of the Model Ethnic Studies Curriculum (ESC) does not meet some of the goals that I consider important to achieve.

I have seen a number of articles about the proposed ESC and have spent some time looking at the proposed Curriculum. Clearly the curriculum does not begin to meet some of the important goals discussed in Chapter 1: "Ethnic Studies is designed to benefit all students. Christine Sleeter, Critical Education scholar, posits, 'rather than being divisive, Ethnic Studies helps students to bridge differences that already exists in experiences and perspectives,' highlighting that division is antithetical to Ethnic Studies." It also says that it will "cultivate empathy, community actualization, cultural perpetuity, self worth, self-determination, and the wholistic well-being of all participants."

Rather, the Curriculum presented does just the opposite. It does not benefit all students, it promotes divisiveness, and highlights differences in a negative way.

My first area of concern is that my ethnic group, Jewish Americans, is virtually absent from the curriculum. (The few instances that Jews are mentioned are negative.) If you are looking for groups that have been discriminated against for millennia, you will likely find no better (or even any other) example than Jews. Jews were exiled from their home in Israel by the Babylonians and The Romans. They have been persecuted throughout the ages, ending in the murder of over 6 million during the Holocaust. I, and almost every Jewish person I know, lost relatives in the Holocaust. I know many people who narrowly escaped with their lives. The propaganda against the Jews and the dehumanization of them enabled the murder of 6 million. Anti-semitism has continued in this country. My family and I have felt it. Unfortunately, is flourishing again today.

How is it possible that a Model ESC makes no positive mention of Jews? Why is anti-semitism not mentioned, even in a lengthy glossary?

How were the ethnic groups that were included in the curriculum chosen? Why are many ethnic groups—more populous than many of those included—not mentioned? For example: Indo-Americans, Iranian-Americans, Armenian-Americans, and Puerto Ricans?

My second area of concern re: the curriculum is that it contain so many inaccuracies, is biased, and lacks balance, especially, in the presentation of divisive issues. This is clearly apparent in the lesson on BDS. Really, there are two sides to most issues. Why is only one presented in this curriculum? It seems that the Curriculum is designed more to bring students to one point of view, and to activism, than to develop critical thinking skills and teach them about fellow Americans in a way that will promote empathy and understanding among groups.

This curriculum, in my opinion, is so flawed that it needs to be rewritten.

I know that many people have written to you with their concerns about this curriculum. I hope you will take the comments you received into consideration in your rewrite of the curriculum.

Sincerely,

Joanne Donsky