



Ms. Soomin Chao  
Chair, Instructional Quality Commission  
California Department of Education  
Sacramento, CA 95814

August 15, 2019

Dear Chairwoman Chao and Members of the Instructional Quality Commission,

We are writing as concerned Californians and representatives of the Jewish Diplomatic Corps, the flagship program of the World Jewish Congress, the international organization representing 100 Jewish communities around the world.

Many of our communities — from Pittsburgh to Paris, Poway to Buenos Aires — have experienced the virulence and violence of antisemitism firsthand and as such, we are deeply disturbed by the proposed Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum of the California Department of Education.

Most alarming is the near complete exclusion of antisemitism from other forms of hatred and discrimination included in the curriculum. This is a glaring omission considering that federal data show Jews are the group most targeted in religion-based hate crimes in the U.S.<sup>1</sup> It is no secret that antisemitism is surging across America and abroad. If the goal of this curriculum is to raise awareness and tolerance, this seems an extraordinarily self-contradictory omission.

In light of the rise of antisemitic incidents in California schools and universities<sup>2</sup>, including the spread of hateful flyers at UC Berkeley<sup>3</sup> and antisemitic graffiti against Jewish students statewide<sup>456</sup>, it is astounding that the State Board would go so far as to champion a curriculum that largely erases the Jewish experience and upholds age-old antisemitic tropes.

Of particular concern is the glorification of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) campaign, which is predicated on misinformation and propaganda that have no place in the California educational system. The Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum positions BDS as a moral equivalent to the American civil rights

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<sup>1</sup> “

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movement when, in fact, BDS neither seeks peace, nor promotes human rights; rather, it openly endorses discrimination against Israelis and Jews, with its main objective being the destruction of Israel, the world's only Jewish state. Omar Barghouti, the founder of BDS himself, encouraged "resistance by any means, including armed resistance," in remarks on the UCLA campus in 2014.<sup>7</sup>

Every time there is an antisemitic incident like Pittsburgh or Poway, the nation is quick to condemn it. But condemnations are not enough when lives are at stake. We must take responsibility for the hateful, inciting messages we are teaching our youth and for the tacit approval of antisemitic bias in the California educational system.

We hope that the same values of introspection and empathy preached by the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum can be applied—through drastic edits—to address these issues. Anything less would be a disgraceful attack on the Jewish community that has been a cornerstone of both California and the United States. We would be pleased to speak on this matter if you would like to discuss it further.

Sincerely,

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<sup>7</sup> Robert P. Seid, "Omar Barghouti at UCLA: A speaker who brings hate," The Jewish Journal, 16 Jan 2014.  
[www.jewishjournal.com/opinion/126186](http://www.jewishjournal.com/opinion/126186)