

From: Andrew Cheng
Sent: Thursday, August 15, 2019 11:58 PM
To: Ethnic Studies
Cc: Tony Thurmond
Subject: Considerations for the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC)

Dear Instructional Quality Commission of the California Board of Education,

My name is Andrew Cheng and I am extremely concerned with the unbalanced Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) that's currently being proposed. I support the idea of teaching an ethnic studies class, but I urge you to make major revisions or a significant rewrite of the ESMC consistent with the recommendations from the California Legislative Jewish Caucus letter, Stand With Us, Jimena, and others.

Why is Judaism important to me? I am a Chinese American who grew up as a Catholic in the San Francisco Bay Area. Over 10 years ago, I converted to Judaism due to a variety of reasons that have drawn me to both its religion and culture. Not only does Judaism integrate prayer, learning, and community work into a person's life, it also offers important guiding values and principles for each individual to live by. As the President of Congregation Beth Am in Los Altos, California, I represent the voices of nearly 1600 families who have made Judaism an integral part of their households.

Why am I concerned with the proposed ESMC? I spent nearly six years as an educator working for a K through 12 supplemental education company owned by the Washington Post Company. From that experience as well as having two children of my own, I have seen first hand how impressionable kids can be. If it weren't for growing up with a close friend who's Jewish, I may not have developed an understanding and appreciation for Judaism.

As you know, 83 civil rights, human rights, religious and education organizations wrote in a [letter](#) organized by the AMCHA Initiative to also express their deep concern by the ESMC. Not only do they urge "the ESMC must be drastically revised or completely re-written," but they also express the following concerns: "Unless and until safeguards are put in place for ensuring that its drafters will not be permitted to use the model curriculum to promote political, ethnic or religious enmity towards any groups, or to weaponize high school students to take action based on such enmity, we fear that whatever model curriculum is adopted by the Instructional Quality Commission will have an enormously negative impact on the state's high schools, colleges and universities for years to come."

I urge you to make major revisions or a significant rewrite of the ESMC to address these concerns.

Thank you,
Andrew S. Cheng