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California Department of Education
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Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation is an educational, research, and human rights nonprofit authorized in 1993 by a unanimous Act of Congress, which was signed as Public Law 103-199 by President William J. Clinton. On June 12, 2007, President George W. Bush dedicated the Victims of Communism Memorial statue in Washington, D.C.

Dear Members of the Instructional Quality Commission,

I am reaching out with deep concern about California's Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC). The Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation submitted a letter on August 12, 2020 and is disappointed to learn that the framework of the curriculum, including its Guiding Values and Principles, has not changed.

Based on the problematic "Guiding Values and Principles," the ESMC promotes and romanticizes specific political ideologies with no counterbalancing perspective. Guidelines should be added, and the sample lessons revised, to ensure that ethnic studies courses focus on a thorough understanding about ethnic groups, social issues, and civic engagement, without political proselytizing.

Tens of millions of Americans trace their heritage to current or former communist countries, including 9 million Polish-Americans, 1.5 million Hungarian-Americans, and 660,000 Lithuanian-Americans. This past decade has demonstrated that communism still poses a threat to the human rights of the one-fifth of the world's population who live under communist regimes. The Foundation's most recent annual poll on U.S. Attitudes Toward Socialism, Communism, and Collectivism showed increased support for communism (36%) among Millennials compared to 2018. Seventy percent of Millennials say they are likely to vote socialist and only 57 percent of Millennials believe the Declaration of Independence better "guarantees freedom and equality" than the Communist Manifesto.

It is vital our educational systems teach the truth about communism to all students. For example, in the current ESMC Draft, while Cambodians are covered under Deportation of Cambodian Americans, there is no reference to the genocidal reign they fled to come to the U.S. There are many Cambodian-American students whose families fled the Khmer Rouge's bloody killing fields and they, along with all students, should learn the truth about this stain in history.

To provide balance, I urge you to include sections of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation's curriculum, *Communism: Its Ideology, Its History, and Its Legacy*, intended for public, private, and home schools across the country. Attached are the appropriate lessons for the Asian-American and Hispanic sections of the ESMC. Using these sections of the curriculum will ensure California students are learning the truth about the history of these communities. The curriculum consists of 10 chapters and can be taught as one continuous series of lessons or chapters can be used as standalone supplements to an already-existing curriculum. Each chapter includes a historical lesson, notes which school standards are being met, and provides supplementary materials and activities for students. I am attaching a PDF version of our curriculum and encourage you to use this resource to modify the current ESMC Draft.

I urge you to make significant revisions to the ESMC to address these concerns. Please revise the Guiding Values and Principles of the ESMC to use more precise and inclusive terminology, to align with the State Board of Education's ESMC Guidelines, to build bridges of intergroup understanding, and to ensure critical thinking.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marion". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Marion Smith
Executive Director