

**From:** Sammer Alomair

**Sent:** Friday, November 13, 2020 2:34 AM

**To:** Ethnic Studies <EthnicStudies@cde.ca.gov>; [emails redacted]

**Cc:** [email redacted]

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Inclusion of Arab American Studies

Dear IQC, Superintendent Tony Thurmond, and Linda Darling-Hammond,

It is objectively true that the decision to exclude Arab Americans from California's high school ethnic studies curriculum by relegating the Arab American lesson to the appendix of the curriculum is exclusionary and discriminatory of Arab Americans specifically and Arabs generally.

California, of all places, should be a safe-haven for all ethnic groups. This invisibilizing act is not becoming of the IQC and must be reversed.

This act dilutes Arab culture and will particularly affect the perception of Arab Americans among the most vulnerable—youth. For too long, Arab youth have learned little about their history besides offensive and racist images and stereotypes. Arab-American studies curriculum provides a critical intervention to these stereotypes in K-12 education.

Additionally, and to a shocking and horrifying degree, a proposed definition of antisemitism equates criticism of Israel with antisemitism. This will indoctrinate a generation of children to become fearful of expressing any criticism of the state of Israel, not to mention the effect this will have on teachers. These definitions violate our constitutional right to free speech because their application censors virtually all criticism of Israel and advocacy for Palestinian human rights and equality. The impact will be felt across California and, by extension, all over the United States.

Thus, I demand that you:

- Include the Arab American lesson plan submitted to the California Department of Education by members of the original Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) advisory committee.
- Re-insert Arab American studies in its rightful place—within Asian American studies.
- Align all lesson plans to the guiding principles of ethnic studies, which are anti-racist, decolonial and liberatory.
- Reject debunked definitions of antisemitism that equate criticism of Israel with antisemitism

Sincerely,  
Sammer Alomair