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Re: Public Comment–2020 Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

The Proposed Curriculum is Severely Flawed and Unfit for Use

1. The proposed Ethnic Studies Curriculum, developed by the California Department of Education, is deeply flawed and unfit for use. As outlined below, these flaws include the pervasive use of material falsehoods, misrepresentations, and the exclusion of necessary facts and foundational information. It is apparent that the authors' bear a predatory purpose: to systematically facilitate the development of anti-Israel perspectives among impressionable students.
2. This matter is particularly insulting and outrageous given that California's Jewish and Israeli-American communities have gone to great lengths to make the truth readily accessible to our broader community. Indeed, the pool of instructive resources and relationships at the disposal of educational administrators and state policymakers is vast. Any objective observer of the proposed curriculum can readily gather its systematic employment of demonization, delegitimization and double standards – each of which can indicate anti-Semitism. Sadly, even the mere proposition of this curriculum brings into doubt the intellectual standards and moral character of many who are involved in California's educational system.
3. In November 2005, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights recognized that anti-Israel sentiment can cross the line into anti-Semitism, and in the Commission's words, "should be distinguished from legitimate discourse regarding foreign policy." The Commission clearly stated: "Anti-Semitic bigotry is no less morally deplorable when camouflaged as anti-Israelism or anti-Zionism." The Commission specifically called on educational administrators to publicly speak out and "set a moral example by denouncing anti-Semitic and other hate speech, while safeguarding all rights protected under the First Amendment and under basic principles of academic freedom." The U.S. Department of Education's Office on Civil Rights has made the same recommendation to educational administrators.
4. In March 2008, the U.S. State Department issued a detailed report on anti-Semitism globally, recognizing that anti-Zionist sentiment and criticism of Israel can cross the line into anti-Jewish bigotry. Whether intended or not, such sentiment and criticism can have the effect of promoting prejudice against Jews. As an example, the State Department noted that demonizing Israel and/or Israelis "as barbaric, unprincipled, selfish, inhumane, etc. is anti-Semitic and has the effect of causing audiences to associate those bad

attributes with Jews in general.” This type of anti-Semitism is no less hurtful or harmful than more traditional forms of anti-Jewish bigotry.

5. *Basic decency demands that the California Department of Education write a new curriculum that is objective, factually correct, apolitical, and grounded in the values of tolerance and respect for all.*

The Proposed Curriculum Promotes National-Origin Based Discrimination and Would Make California Party to Anti-Semitic Hatred (Page 2, Lines 30-40)

6. Among the most disturbing aspects of the proposed curriculum is its promotion of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanction Movement (BDS). BDS is the formal name given to the economic and political warfare component of a campaign being waged against the world's one and only Jewish country - attacking virtually every aspect of its historic, legal, political, economic and cultural life - with the aim of undermining the sovereignty, security and legitimacy of Israel's very existence. More specifically, BDS refers to the tactics employed to discriminate against Israelis, Jews, their trade partners and supporters. BDS promotes discrimination against Israel on the basis of national origin.
7. It is a thoroughly documented fact that in the course of promoting discrimination against Israel, the BDS Movement purposefully uses misinformation and baseless claims, as well as classic anti-Semitic themes, such as the suggestion of Jewish subversion, conspiracy, disloyalty, greed and economic control, and most importantly, blood libels. The overwhelming presence of such falsehoods dispenses with any need to consider the threshold where legitimate criticism of the Israel crosses the line into anti-Semitism. The BDS Movement's messaging strategy not only seeks to promote negative perceptions of Israel, but also bigoted perspectives aimed at the state's Jewish character and supporters. The State of California must not be made party to anti-Semitic hatred.

The Proposed Curriculum Poses a Material Threat to the Safety and Civil Rights of Pro-Israel, Jewish and Israeli-American Students

8. Boycotts of entities and individuals of specific countries often amount to ethnic, religious, racial and nationality discrimination. History repeatedly shows that when boycotts and bigoted propaganda are aimed at Jewish persons in particular, it eventually gives way to severe anti-Semitic discrimination, and ultimately to violent persecution. It is no coincidence that all current research data indisputably shows that Jews are among the most likely of all minority groups to be victimized in incidents motivated by hate, particularly within educational institutions.
9. The attempt of the proposed curriculum to promote national-origin discrimination efforts against Israel directly contradicts the public policy of our federal government and the state of California, and the essential values of our community. If implemented, the curriculum would quickly lead to an environment of fear, intimidation and harassment for pro-Israel and Jewish students, particularly Israeli-Americans.

Jews and Israeli-Americans Were Intentionally Excluded from the Proposed Curriculum

10. Despite being an ethnic studies curriculum meant to objectively focus on American minorities, the American-Jewish community has been entirely excluded. Given the many obvious points of Jewish communal contribution throughout the history of the United States, as well as the high-profile nature of anti-Semitic attacks that have recently taken place in Poway and elsewhere, it is obvious that this omission was not merely due to an insensitive oversight, but rather disturbingly, was intentional.
11. As stated by the California DOE, "the curriculum is written for educators or community members seeking guidance in developing a local high school ethnic studies program that reflects the pupil demographics in their communities". Per the most recent U.S. Census estimates, there are roughly 8,000,000 to 10,000,000 Americans that identify as Jewish which is 1.7% -2.6% of the total U.S. Population. There are also almost 250,000 Israeli-Americans in California. It is unacceptable that this curriculum includes no representation of Jewish and Israeli-American identity whatsoever.
12. In general, the Jewish people are a distinct group bearing a variety of religious, ethnic and cultural characteristics. Likewise, they collectively possess a unique and relevant history, cultural practices, traditions, and have made key contributions to American society. American Jews and Israeli-Americans possess a unique immigrant experience, tracing back to the American Colonial period and extending through more recent waves of arrival. This includes those who fled the Holocaust and persecution, as well as others who have come to make unique contributions to America. Despite facing discrimination, Jews and Israeli-Americans have nevertheless come to exemplify important aspects of the merits to be found in America's overall values, and have made many impressive contributions to society. To invalidate Jewish and Israeli-Americans by excluding their worthwhile narratives would teach the wrong lessons to students.
13. If anything, now is a time to enhance students' understanding and overall sensitivity toward the Jewish community. A report issued by the Anti-Defamation League detailed a shocking 67% increase in incidents from 2016 to 2017. A 2015 Brandeis Center-Trinity College study found that most Jewish-American college students had personally experienced or witnessed anti-Semitism. An AMCHA Initiative survey found a 45% increase in anti-Semitic activity on college and university campuses between 2015 and 2016. Given that anti-Semitic incidents are increasing at an alarming rate in the United States, it is outrageous that the proposed curriculum would nevertheless seek to instead promote the anti-Semitic BDS Movement, which has been widely condemned for its anti-Semitic nature.

The Proposed Curriculum Contradicts Public Policy and Would Immediately Compromise the Integrity and Reputation of California's Educational System

14. As to the Glossary, as previously explained, BDS promotes discrimination against Israel on the basis of national origin. Nevertheless, in the glossary of the curriculum, the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement is misleadingly defined as a positive social movement seeking "freedom" (Page 2, Lines 30-40). Teachers promoting this perspective would not only be misinforming students regarding the BDS Movement's harmful objectives, they would also be encouraging them to join in the perspective and discriminatory efforts of a thoroughly documented anti-Semitic hate group.

15. Twenty-seven (27) U.S. states, including California, have passed legislation and/or official policy resolutions against BDS activity. In fact, just weeks ago congressional Republicans and Democrats overwhelmingly united to pass a resolution condemning BDS. BDS discrimination is not just morally unwelcome in America, but has furthermore been rejected as a matter of clear-eyed public policy. Adoption of the proposed curriculum would immediately compromise the integrity and overall reputation of California's public educational system.

The Proposed Curriculum Demonizes Israel with the Lie of Apartheid

16. Furthermore as to the Glossary, in promoting the BDS Movement, the proposed curriculum's glossary engages the canard that Israel is an "apartheid" state (Page 2, Lines 31). The aim of this demonizing lie is to portray Israel as evil, malicious or lacking in morality. A simple review of the facts reveals the stunning impropriety of applying this term to Israel. In Israel, all citizens regardless of ethnicity or religion can hold public office. Arab citizens, who make up 20% of the Israeli population, are fully represented in the Knesset, have become judges seated on the supreme court, and serve as ministers of important government ministries. Despite the misrepresentations of the BDS Movement, Israeli-Arabs, Druze, Jews, and others live, work, and socialize together in a diverse society. Furthermore, 99% of non-citizen Arabs who reside in Israeli-controlled territories live autonomously under the full civil administration of the Palestinian Authority, not the Israeli government.
17. The truth is that Israel is the only country in its region that maintains a climate of respect for the civil liberties of all its citizens, offers a significant independent civic life even for non-citizens, and safeguards important basic rights such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion and freedom of the press. Indeed, Israel's respect for civil liberties and basic rights like freedom of speech, religion and the press, mirrors the founding principles of the United States; Just as Americans value their freedoms and fight to maintain them, Israelis hold them as a badge of honor and go to great lengths to uphold them.

The Proposed Curriculum Uses an Anti-Israel Double Standard to suggest BDS is a Liberation Movement

18. In Chapter 2: Sample Course Models Introduction to Ethnic Studies Course Outline, when explaining the concept of "liberation", the proposed curriculum legitimizes BDS by presenting it as an exemplary movement (Page 10, Lines 248-250). According to Omar Barghouti, who is widely considered the founding father of the BDS Movement, the objective is to destroy the Jewish nation's self-determination and sovereignty in Israel, its ancestral homeland, and replace it with a state in which Jews would be demographically diluted into a minority. Seeking to dispossess an indigenous nation of its self-determination in its ancestral homeland is not a liberation movement.

The Proposed Curriculum Gives Credence to the Anti-Semitic Nation of Islam

19. In Chapter 2: Sample Course Models African American Studies Course Outline, listed among sample topic for discussion, the curriculum mentions African American Spiritual

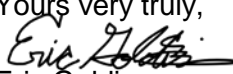
and Religious Traditions (Page 48, Lines 969-970). One particular group highlighted is the "National of Islam" [sic], likely referring to the "Nation of Islam" (NOI). NOI is led by Louis Farrakhan, a notorious anti-Semite who has referred to Jews as "termites", called Judaism a "gutter religion", and claimed that Jews and Zionists took part in the 9/11 terrorist attacks. It is unacceptable for an organization led by such a hateful bigot to be legitimized in the classroom.

The Proposed Curriculum Teaches students that Factual Integrity and Objectivity Do Not Matter

20. In Chapter 2, Sample Course Models Arab American Studies Course Outline, the bias of the proposed curriculum is particularly evident in its use of highly-charged language that inherently promotes a negative perception of Israel (Page 236, Line 4992; Page 237, Lines 5030-5031; Page 241, Line 5138; Page 242, Lines 5158-5161). This bias is consistent with the Palestinian-Arab "Nakba" propaganda narrative, which seeks to falsely present Palestinians as victims of forced "dispossession" rather than willing participants in a war aimed at Israel's destruction. Students deserve to receive the facts of history with integrity and objectivity intact, free from one-sided revisionism and corrupting biases.

The Proposed Curriculum Glorifies Anti-Semitic Figures as Role Models

21. Also in Chapter 2, Sample Course Models Arab American Studies Course Outline, the curriculum glorifies several problematic figures as role models for children. The most concerning is Linda Sarsour (Page 235, Line 4970). Linda Sarsour has consistently expressed hatred for Jews and the State of Israel and works toward the political tolerance of such hateful views. Sarsour once even expressed support for sexual violence against a woman. Sarsour has actively tried to delegitimize the connection between Jews and Israel.
22. In October of 2012, Sarsour tweeted out "Nothing is creepier than Zionism". Recently, she claimed that Jesus was Palestinian, a gross example of historical delegitimization. Of course, Linda Sarsour also strongly advocates for the anti-Semitic BDS Movement while downplaying incidents of hate and violence against Jewish persons.
23. Regarding feminism, Sarsour has charged that Zionist-feminist women are not true feminists, in an effort to dispossess them of their identities. Even worse, she joked about the removal of the genitals of a prominent feminist who had been the victim of FGM. Furthermore, Sarsour associates with open anti-Semites and known terrorists. Linda Sarsour is an ally of Louis Farrakhan, and publicly embraced deported terrorist, Rasmea Odeh. A person who embraces terrorists, stands with anti-Semites, jokes about FGM, downplays anti-Semitic victimization, and support BDS discrimination is unfit to be a role model for California's students.

Yours very truly,

Eric Goldie