

From: Majdal Center

Sent: Tuesday, August 11, 2020 10:19 AM

To: Ethnic Studies

Cc: Superintendent; [emails redacted]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Include Arab American Studies in CA Ethnic Studies Curriculum

Dear Policymakers,

We write from the Majdal Community Center in San Diego to urge you to keep Arab American studies and Palestine in the ethnic studies curriculum for California.

The Majdal Center is an organization dedicated to uplifting and advocating for the Arab community in El Cajon. We work with refugees and immigrants, individuals and families, people facing a wide variety of disenfranchisement and in need of various forms of support. Through our work, we have seen that education is a crucial issue for many of the communities we service. On the one hand, students from these communities have been facing intense Islamophobia in public schools. These very same schools also seem devoid of any critical educational programming on Arab American and/or Muslim communities. While positive representation is not everything, we do believe it can go a long way towards helping people feel valued and empowered, and so we believe that it is important to advocate for an ethnic studies model that includes Arab American studies.

Palestine should also not be excluded from this model, because it is a central issue for Arab American identity and life, even for those Arab Americans who don't directly identify as Palestinian themselves. As many important community scholars and activists have pointed out for decades and continue to mention today, much of the social oppression and institutional repression that Arab Americans have faced from the late '60s to the present is tied to the US's unilateral foreign policy support for Israel. But what is discussed and handed down in Washington is not the full story. Our communities deserve to have their struggles foregrounded, their narratives of resistance proudly celebrated.

As community advocates who have seen firsthand the transformative impact of positive cultural education and empowerment, we are calling on

you today to keep Arab American studies and Palestine in statewide ethnic studies programming.

Sincerely,
The Majdal Community Center