



May 26, 2020

TO: Board of Directors, Oakland United School District

SUBJECT: Vote YES on Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

Block by Block Organizing Network (BBBON) is a city-wide, district-based group of volunteers working together for “One Oakland.” Many of our members and supporters have children who attend schools throughout the City, and all of us are passionate in our concern that Oakland’s schools serve all our children well.

We urge you to lift up one of OUSD’s core values – Students First – by supporting the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum led by scholars of color from across California. Oakland is exactly the kind of city that should stand up for our underrepresented communities and assure that all our students see themselves reflected in their studies.

Ethnic Studies is about empowering students of color who are marginalized and minimized by old curricula. All students -- including white students -- greatly benefit from having critical conversations about race and ethnicity, so that all Oaklanders can build skills to participate in our society and build stronger communities and neighborhoods.

Now, more than ever, Pacific Islander, Arab American, and Central American Studies must be included. That should be self-evident and non-controversial. But unfortunately, some see fit to disparage the need for this curriculum. This controversy is a perfect example of exactly why all students should be exposed to conversations addressing racial and ethnic tensions in our community, so that they – and all of us -- can move toward healing, understanding, and solidarity across all of our cultures.

The current attacks on Ethnic Studies, and Arab American Studies in particular, are unjust and racist. The Oakland School Board must reject them. We urge you to vote YES to adopt the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.

Sharon Rose, for Block by Block Organizing Network