



August 10, 2020

National Iranian American Council
Re: California Ethnic Studies Curriculum

Dear California Department of Education,

As the largest grassroots, Iranian-American advocacy group in the United States, we would like to express our strong support for the original Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) Draft, and underscore the importance of a program that includes marginalized communities, long ignored by our curriculum.

In recent years the Iranian-American community has faced continuous challenges, from the Muslim ban that prevents our families from traveling to the U.S., to the persistent fear of war, and a rising atmosphere of discrimination. But we are certainly not alone. In these times, studies of Orientalism, anti-Muslim racism, critical refugee studies, and our diaspora experiences help youth make sense of their realities.

The West Asian community comprises a large portion of California's cultural tapestry. Los Angeles alone is home to the largest Iranian diaspora in the world. Yet the model curriculum only presents a narrow lens, which overlooks the historical and sociocultural experiences that comprise our diverse community. Iranian Americans are not the only West Asian community erased in this draft. We are also concerned about the removal of Arab American and Pacific Islander Studies, further erasing critical communities that make up California's rich diversity.

For our own community, it is important that young Iranian Americans see themselves represented in their education. Not only as part of the diverse milieu of the American experience, but also for the contributions of Iranian history and culture to world history. Iranian Americans

(202) 386-6325
Extension 103



contact@niacouncil.org
niacouncil.org



1629 K St NW, Suite 503
Washington, DC 20006





should be proud of their culture and history at home, as well as the culture and history of their heritage.

Our students are growing up in a world which normalizes these diverse realities. U.S. Ethnic Studies allows for and offers the tools for marginalized students to unpack and unlearn structures of power and have access to empowered education and pedagogy. Learning about the various histories of all Americans will provide our students with a complete picture of the United States and society we all share.

We ask that you to consider judiciously the consequences of erasing these communities from our school curriculum, to incorporate “West Asian Studies” to the model curriculum to ensure that Arab, Iranian, Armenian, Palestinian, Kurdish, Afghan, Turkish, and Assyrian Americans, among others, are included, and ensure that the curriculum is made in consultation with ethnic studies practitioners from these communities.

Sincerely,

The National Iranian American Council

(202) 386-6325
Extension 103



contact@niacouncil.org
niacouncil.org



1629 K St NW, Suite 503
Washington, DC 20006

