From: David LeVine

Sent: Monday, August 10, 2020 8:52 PM

To: Ethnic Studies **Cc:** [emails redacted]

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Include Antisemitism and the Middle Eastern-American Experience

Dear Ethnic Studies Committee Members,

My name is David LeVine and I am a resident of California. My wife and I raised our daughters here and my wife and I and one of our daughters attended college here. While our specific ancestry is not Middle Eastern, we have many relatives who are of that background.

I would like to thank the California Department of Education for working so hard to improve the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum

As a Jewish person, I continue to face bigotry and discrimination in this country.

In keeping with AB 2016's objective of "preparing pupils to be global citizens with an appreciation for the contributions of multiple cultures," the more than 60% of other Middle Eastern groups in California deserve equal representation and inclusion in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.

2018 California Hate Crime Statistics noted that Anti-Jewish events increased by over twenty percent while Anti-Muslim bias events decreased by more than forty percent. As a Jewish person who has experienced/witnessed religiously motivated hate, I believe our students deserve to learn about both Islamophobia and Antisemitism in an ethnic studies framework.

When the primary reference of Jews in the revised Ethnic Studies curriculum is in the context of our communities being the beneficiaries of white privilege – my Middle Eastern Jewish community, which is comprised of multiple immigrants and people of color, is completely erased. I fear this unit will contribute to the dangerous antisemitic trope that, "Jews Have Too Much Power." Furthermore, this reference ignores the experiences of European Jews who continue to be personally impacted by violent white-supremacy, genocide, and acts of antisemitism.

At a time when there is great need to provide our students with high-quality educational content related to bigotry, it is essential to incorporate adequate instructional material on antisemitism – not just simplistic references to it.

All references to Middle Eastern people in the curriculum should include, specifically name, and teach on the diverse groups of Mizrahi Jews, Coptic Christians, Kurds, Iranians, Assyrians, and other minority groups from the region who together represent 60% of California's Middle Eastern population and have asked for inclusion. In order for the curriculum to avoid an essentialist understanding of Arabs and the Middle East, and in order to be well balanced, each group should be equally and equitably represented in the Ethnic Studies Curriculum.

I would like to see the next draft of the curriculum include the lesson plan, "Antisemitism and Middle Eastern-American Jews" produced by the organization, JIMENA: Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa, as it will provide students with high-quality instruction on contemporary issues of antisemitism, bigotry, and the Middle Eastern-American Jewish experience.

The ESMC should make clear that under the "broadly defined umbrella of Asian Studies" are Mizrahi Jews and other Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) groups which represent ~60% of CA's MENA population. California Department of Education's Chapter 3 agrees: appropriate topics in the Asian section of Ethnic Studies courses are "the unique experiences of Arabs and other Middle Easterners."

Sincerely,

David LeVine