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March 23, 2020

Dear Superintendent Tony Thurmond, Chief Superintendent Stephanie Gregson, Instructional Quality Commission Chair Jose Iniguez, and Instructional Quality Commission Executive Director Shanine Coats,

Thank you for your tireless efforts on behalf of students and families across our state as you address the many challenges Coronavirus poses for California's students and administrators.

We are sharing the following in advance of the upcoming Instructional Quality Commission meeting on the California Department of Education's recommended changes to the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC).

As you may know, **antisemitic hate crimes are rising dramatically in California, a 21% uptick last year alone, with Jews the most frequent religious and 3rd most frequent ethnic hate crime target in our state[i]** so it is imperative that the ESMC include a definition of antisemitism.

We urge you to use the most widely-accepted definition of antisemitism, developed in 2005 by the European Union (Agency: European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia), and later adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, an organization made up of 34 member countries including the US, and since endorsed by the Obama administration's US State Department, the US Department of Education, the Secretary-General of the Organization for American States which includes almost all the countries in the Western Hemisphere, the European Parliament, organizations monitoring antisemitism and many others:

"Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities." [ii]

This is the definition in the United States House of Representatives' Never Again Education Act (H. R. 943) co-sponsored by 302 representatives including 45 from California such as Jackie Speier, Ro Khanna, Ted Lieu, Barbara Lee, Zoe Lofgren, Anna Eshoo and Adam Schiff.

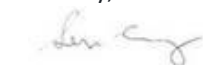
Governor Gavin Newsom, concerned about the rise in antisemitism in California, apologized for the first draft ESMC's erasure of the Jewish community citing the recent antisemitic-fueled murder and attempted mass murder of Poway's Jewish residents and children in his own son's school expressing hatred of Jews. [iii] Superintendent Thurmond, you agreed: "Acts of hate are happening against the Jewish people. They must be included." [iv] The intent of former Assembly member Alejo, the sponsor of AB 2016's Ethnic Studies model curriculum bill, is clear: California's children need to "gain a deeper understanding of ...their neighbors." This, he said, includes "Jewish Americans." [v]

Antisemitism's dramatic resurgence has prompted international organizations to disseminate reports to educational institutions worldwide. [vi] Working under the mandate of the United Nation's Human Rights Council, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religions or Belief Ahmed Shaheed issued "Combating Antisemitism to Eliminate Discrimination and Intolerance Based on Religion or Belief." In it, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres notes that antisemitism "threatens all people's human rights" and "where there is antisemitism, there are likely to be other discriminatory ideologies and forms of bias." [vi] UNESCO's "Addressing antisemitism through education: guidelines for policymakers" explains that contemporary "anti-Semitism threatens the realization of all people's human rights and the overall security of states where it occurs." This international authority, along with others, caution that education about the Holocaust, while important, is not an adequate substitute for education that aims to prevent anti-Semitism. [vii]

We appreciate your assurances that the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum will be an important tool to address anti-Semitism and other forms of prejudice. Left unaddressed, all forms of anti-Semitism undermine democratic values and feed violent extremism. And so, we urge you to adopt this widely accepted definition of antisemitism in the Model Curriculum, and stand ready to provide additional resources and educational materials.

Please let us know if you have any questions. Thank you for your attention and consideration. And we hope that you continue to stay well and continue to provide needed leadership in the face of these unprecedented challenges.

Sincerely,



Serena Eisenberg
AJC Northern California Director



Richard S. Hirschhaut
AJC Los Angeles Director

cc. State Board of Education President Linda Darling-Hammond
Senator Ben Allen (Legislative Jewish Caucus)

Hate Crime Statistics

<u>Overall Hate Crimes</u> (2018) (Top 5)		<u>California</u>	<u>US</u>
		#1 Anti-Black 26% of total	#1 Anti-Black 27% of total
		#2 Anti-Gay (male) 16% of total	#2 Anti-Jewish 12% of total
		#3 Anti-Hispanic 14% of total	#3 Anti-White 11% of total
		#4 Anti-Jewish 12% of total	#4 Anti-Gay (male) 10% of total
		#5 Anti-White 4.5% of total	#5 Anti-Hispanic 7% of total
<u>Religious-Based Hate Crimes (RBHC)</u> (2018)	<u>% of CA Population</u>		
Anti-Jewish	2%	#1 – up 21% from 2017 126 incidents 63% of total RBHC	#1 – down 11% from 2017 835 incidents 58% of total RBHC
Anti-Muslim	1%	#3 – down 39% from 2017 28 incidents 14% of total RBHC	#2 – down 31% from 2017 188 incidents 13% of total RBHC
Anti-Sikh			#3 60 incidents 4% of total RBHC
Other (not Xian or above)	~11%	#2 30 incidents 15% of total RBHC	

California

Hate Crimes: <https://data-openjustice.doj.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2019-07/Hate%20Crime%20In%20CA%2020190701.pdf>

Religion Demographics: <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/state/california/>

US

Hate Crimes: <https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2018-hate-crime-statistics-released-111219> and <https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2018/downloads/downloads> Religion Demographics: <https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/>

[i] <https://oag.ca.gov/hatecrimes>.

[ii] <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/working-definition-antisemitism>

[iii] <https://www.jweekly.com/2019/08/23/in-face-to-face-with-gov-newsom-strong-support-for-jewish-concerns/>

[iv] <https://www.jweekly.com/2019/08/14/jews-must-be-included-in-ethnic-studies-curriculum-says-state-schools-chief-at-press-conference/>

[v] Letter to Governor Brown (August 30, 2016) and Superintendent Thurmond (August 15, 2019).

[vi] UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religions or Belief Ahmed Shaheed, "Combating Antisemitism to Eliminate Discrimination and Intolerance Based on Religion or Belief" https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/A_74_47921ADV.pdf (September 23, 2019)

[vii] <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000263702> (2018). ("Educators must play a central role...Education about the Holocaust, while important, is not an adequate substitute for education that aims to prevent anti-Semitism...")