



January 21, 2021

Dear Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond, members of the State Board of Education, and  
Superintendent Tony Thurmond:

My name is Gregg Solkovits, and as a longtime Social Studies teacher who ALWAYS attempted to incorporate Ethnic Studies into my curriculum, I applaud the move by the State of California to develop a high quality Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.

Today I write both as a longtime educator, AND as President of Democrats for Israel-Los Angeles. I write to lend my voice, and the voice of the hundreds of members of my organization, to ESMC adoption process. We appreciate all the hard work that has gone into the development of an Ethnic Studies Model curriculum over the last two years. We fully support the development of an Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum that centers on the narratives of the four foundational groups of Ethnic Studies—Black, Latinx, Asian Pacific Islander, and Native Americans—while also finding a way to meaningfully include the many, diverse communities that make up our state, including Jews.

As you know, MANY educators, as well as many in the Jewish community had significant concerns with earlier drafts of the curriculum. It is heartening to see that the California Department of Education and the Instructional Quality Commission were receptive to that feedback, and the recommendations approved at the IQC meeting in November were great improvements to the curriculum.

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While minor improvements can and should still be made, we would be pleased to see to the current iteration of this curriculum introduced into classrooms across California. However, there are some changes that we would like to see made to ensure the curriculum remains acceptable to many in our communities:

1. Retain the new lessons that reflect California's ethnic diversity, which were added to the curriculum in November—those about Korean, Sikh, Armenian, Arab, and Jewish Americans.
2. Ensure that the curriculum does not contain BDS or antisemitism. This content was previously and rightfully removed. Definitions of antisemitism, which have been added, should remain in the curriculum.
3. Remove mentions of historical figures that engaged in antisemitic rhetoric or behavior.

In the end, an Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum that is done right will be a vital tool to help students build empathy and bridge divides. This greater understanding, coupled with increased representation, is key in the fight against hatred, bigotry, and white supremacy in our society at large.

Thank you for your hard work to get this curriculum to a place so many of us can be proud to know is being taught in our classrooms.



Sincerely,

***Gregg Solkovits***

Gregg Solkovits, President  
Democrats for Israel – Los Angeles