



# Jewish Federation & Family Services

ORANGE COUNTY

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August 9, 2019

Ms. Soomin Chao  
Chair, Instructional Quality Commission  
California Department of Education  
1430 N. Street Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chairwoman Chao and Members of the Instructional Quality Commission:

We write to add our voice to the thousands of Californians and numerous organizations and coalitions who have expressed alarm over the current draft of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC). We support the teaching of ethnic studies in California, and are appreciate the tremendous value in recognizing the great diversity in California's ethnic makeup. However, the current draft falls short of its goal to "prepare pupils to be global citizens with an appreciation for the contributions of multiple cultures," as a result of its erasure of, and at times hostility to, the American Jewish experience, and its one-sided representation of the highly complex and disputed conflict between the Israel and the Palestinian people.

The Rose Project of Jewish Federation & Family Services (JFFS) advocates on behalf of the Orange County Jewish community on issues of concern, and work in coalition with our diverse neighbors on certain issues of human rights and dignity that affect the broader community. Membership of JFFS consists of a broad base of individuals and organizations across the political spectrum and religious denominations, including thousands of parents whose children attend Orange County public schools and who are directly affected by the decisions of the Instructional Quality Commission. Many of these parents, as well as other concerned members of our community, have reached out to us in recent days to express grave worry with the draft ESMC. Thus while our concerns were originally communicated to you in a letter from the Institute for Curricular Services on behalf of numerous Jewish Federations throughout California, we are rearticulating our appeal for revisions in light of calls from those in our community who seek to ensure that their voices are heard as well.

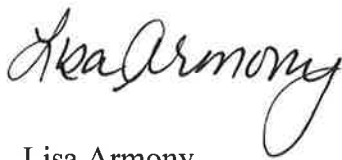
We support and draw your attention to the detailed comments submitted by the Institute for Curricular Services and the Jewish Public Affairs Committee as well as by Jews Indigenous to

the Middle East and North Africa, and the Legislative Jewish and LGBT caucuses. Among the concerns shared by these broad-based and diverse groups are the omission of Jews as an ethnic group and of antisemitism as a form of bias and prejudice; negative stereotypes of Jews and Israel; and inclusion of, and support for, the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement which presents a single, divisive viewpoint on a complex issue and that creates a hostile environment for those who disagree with or question its principles.

California students deserve the best education possible, and will surely benefit from an ethnic studies curriculum that serves to alleviate prejudice and bigotry and that supports inclusion, empathy and critical thinking. We are grateful that the IQC has taken the initiative to create a high-quality model curriculum for our young people, and that it has been open to hearing from Californians on this important matter. Our hope is that our collective voice gives the commission pause to reflect on the deep flaws of the draft, while demonstrating the need to introduce needed revisions. These include a sensitive inclusion of California Jewish history and culture as well as antisemitism and the elimination of irrelevant and inflammatory polemics about Israel. We believe that these revisions are critical to the ESMC's ability to meet its own standards of equity, inclusiveness and universally high expectations.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Lisa Armony". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lisa" and last name "Armony" clearly distinguishable.

Lisa Armony  
Director, Rose Project