

From: Sanna Alas

Sent: Thursday, August 13, 2020 3:51 PM

To: Ethnic Studies

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Include Arab American Studies in CA Ethnic Studies Curriculum

To whom it may be concerned:

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Sanna Alas, and I am a concerned citizen who grew up in California, attending high school in Orange County and college at UCLA. I write this email to express my deep concern about the erasure of Arab American and Pacific Islander studies in the revisions made in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.

My time as a high school student in Orange County, California was one of the most formative in my life. It was where I began to figure out my place in the world, where I made some of my closest friends, and also where I encountered the most discrimination and isolation as a hijab-wearing Muslim & Arab-American woman. I wonder what my high school experience would have been if my curriculum had included information about my people and my history.

The Ethnic Studies framework creates space for students to interrogate their assumptions about others. It is a curriculum which fosters critical thinking and builds solidarity and community between students of different backgrounds. It is anti-racism in action. To exclude Arab-Americans and Pacific Islanders from this curriculum is to withhold a rich and complex history which explores issues of race, justice, geopolitics, immigration, nationalism, settler colonialism, orientalism, agency, dispossession, and transnational solidarity.

I urge the California Department of Education to retain Arab American Studies in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, along with other critical components of the draft. We must not compromise on the quality of our state's education. Now more than ever, we must tackle the difficult questions -- on race, belonging, justice, and power -- which have festered in our political institutions for too long. This moment is both an opportunity and a privilege to decide the future of the next generation. I implore you to think of students like myself when making your decision.

Thank you,

Sanna Alas