

**Public Input Template–2020 Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum
May 2019 Draft**

(Download and use to provide specific recommendations)

Include the chapter of the model curriculum, the page number, and line number(s) to ensure that the California Department of Education and Instructional Quality Commission can reference the content of the document when reviewing your comments. Please email this document as a Word document to ethnicstudies@cde.ca.gov. You may contact Kenneth McDonald, Education Programs Consultant, at kmcdonal@cde.ca.gov with any questions regarding this template or the public input process.

GENERAL

Jay Kilberg

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Concerned citizen and Father of two children who attend California public schools

I share the perspective of the Members of the California Legislative Jewish Caucus in their deep concern with the current draft of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) and agree with their comments which I have restated below. I support efforts to ensure that California students understand our state's complicated history and rich diversity. However, I cannot support a curriculum that erases the American Jewish experience, fails to discuss antisemitism, reinforces negative stereotypes about Jews, singles out Israel for criticism, and would institutionalize the teaching of antisemitic stereotypes in our public schools. I respectfully request that the IQC address the matters outlined below.

The Draft Curriculum Effectively Erases the American Jewish Experience

Despite the significant contributions of Jews to California's history, politics, culture, and government—and our community's longstanding struggle against hatred and discrimination—the ESMC effectively erases the American Jewish experience. Indeed, notwithstanding widespread agreement that Judaism is a form of identity that is broader than religion, and the inclusion of religion in sample courses for African American, Native American, Latin American, and Arab American Studies, Jews are essentially excluded from the ESMC. We have been advised that this exclusion appeared to be intentional and reflected the political bias of the drafters of the ESMC. This purposeful exclusion is deeply insulting, fundamentally inconsistent with the purposes of ethnic studies, harmful to Jewish and non-Jewish students, and indicative of an anti Jewish bias in the ESMC that would be dangerous to institutionalize in our curriculum.

The Draft Curriculum Omits Antisemitism

While the ESMC specifies the importance of studying hate crimes, white supremacy, bias, prejudice, and discrimination, and specifically discusses bias against other communities, it omits any meaningful discussion of antisemitism." This glaring omission is deeply troubling, especially against the backdrop of a recent surge in violent antisemitic incidents, which has included the shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh—the deadliest attack on Jews in U.S. history—and the tragic shooting at the Chabad in Poway earlier this year. Moreover, while the Jewish Caucus applauds the inclusion of "Islamophobia" and other forms of discrimination in the ESMC Glossary, it is difficult to understand how a similar definition of antisemitism was not included, especially given that a majority of religiously-based hate crimes in the United States in 2017 were motivated by anti-Jewish bias." In sum, we find it alarming—to say the least—that at a time when Nazis are marching openly in Charlottesville chanting "Jews will not replace us," and Jews in our own state are being physically attacked in houses of worship, the ESMC would intentionally turn a blind eye to hatred and discrimination against our community.

The Draft Curriculum Denigrates Jews

In the few instances where the ESMC actually acknowledges Jews, it does so in a denigrating and discriminatory manner. For example, the ESMC recommends song lyrics that inappropriately delve into the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with strong bias and little nuance, and asserts that Israelis "use the press so they can manufacture," a classic antisemitic trope about

Jewish control of the media. It is difficult to fathom why—especially at a time of rising antisemitism and real fear in the Jewish community--the State of California would want to actively promote a narrative about Jews that echoes the propaganda of the Nazi Regime.

The Draft Curriculum Singles Out Israel for Condemnation

The anti-Jewish bias of the ESMC is further reflected in its not-so-subtle promotion of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, which is widely perceived by many in the Jewish community and beyond as an effort to promote discrimination against Jews, Israelis, and/or Israeli-Americans. Notably, in stark contrast to brief and dispassionate references to other global conflicts,' the ESMC singles out Israel—the world's only Jewish state—for special critique and condemnation that is both out of context and factually inaccurate. Singling out the Jewish State in this fashion and placing BDS alongside domestically-focused civil rights movements is especially problematic as BDS is an international movement whose focus goes significantly beyond the disciplinary boundaries of American ethnic studies, which focuses on the experiences and struggles of ethnic groups within the United States. Moreover, contrary to the ESMC guidelines, the references to BDS are not inclusive, and present a single viewpoint on an extraordinarily complex international political dispute. The effort by the drafters of the ESMC to stretch to include BDS in the curriculum is directly contrary to established California law and policy and raises further questions about the drafters' anti-Jewish bias and effort to institutionalize the teaching of their own narrow political ideology.

It would be a cruel irony if a curriculum meant to help alleviate prejudice and bigotry were to instead marginalize Jewish students and fuel hatred and discrimination against the Jewish community. Without significant edits, the ESMC will do just that.

I appreciate your consideration of the points above and your review of the proposed curriculum. I ask for your timely attention to this matter