To Whom It May Concern:

We are writing to express our support for the concept of ethnic studies requirements for all graduating California students. We are also writing to express our expectations that any course materials and curriculum will include addressing the Jewish community as a significant minority in California, the United States, and the world including education on the Holocaust and historical and ongoing anti-Semitism. We ask that if the curriculum addresses Israel, that it will be a balanced and fair address of the country that is free from anti-Semitism in its framing and content.

National research shows that the memory of the Holocaust is fading both in America and Europe. The importance educating tomorrow's leaders on this profound failure of civilization in the perpetuation of multiple genocides against the LGBTQ+ community, the Romani community, and most explicitly, the Jewish community cannot be understated. A 50-state survey conducted by The Claims Conference found that 59% of Millennials and Gen Y are not aware that 6 million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust and 13% actually believe that Jews *caused* the Holocaust. We affirm and support the excellent curriculum programs that utilize the Holocaust to not only educate about this particular historical tragedy, but to educate about all forms of hatred, bias, prejudice and genocide. An excellent example of such a curriculum is "Facing History, Facing Ourselves." This curriculum can serve as a model and basis for a balanced and respectful ethnic studies curriculum that is both comprehensive to address California's beautiful diversity of minority ethnic communities and is free from bias that allows disputes between different ethnic communities to create a curriculum that perpetuates hate, stereotyping, intolerance and bigotry.

Anti-Semitism is a historical reality and an ongoing problem. The Hate Crime in California report for 2019 documents that while overall hate crimes have dropped by 4.8%, anti-Semitic hate crimes have increased by 12% - a statistic we have sadly witnessed first-hand right here in San Diego including the Chabad of Poway shooting. Additionally, the report indicates that 67.8% of all religious hate crimes are perpetuated against Jews. This high statistic stands in the face of California's Jewish population. We only comprise 2% of the population.

Israel is a complicated and highly-charged, highly-politicized conversation. We recognize, as Jews, that we are one of several historical and indigenous peoples involved in an ongoing historical conflict. We respectfully ask that if it must be addressed in the ethnic studies curriculum that it only be included after there is explicit affirmation that the content is not anti-Semitic. That affirmation needs to come from an organization which broadly represents the Jewish community such as the Anti-Defamation League. Fringe and extremist groups such as "Jewish Voices for Peace" are not broadly representative of the Jewish community and therefore cannot affirm that content is not anti-Semitic.

We recognize that creating inclusive, respectful, and appropriate ethnic studies content is both a wonderful opportunity and a great challenge. We, as Jews, celebrate living in a state with such beautiful and broad diversity. We ask that the ethnic studies curriculum content represent that beautiful diversity and present it from a place of honoring the historical and ongoing contributions and struggles of all people, as well as being a model for respectful engagement and dialogue around sensitive content.

We thank you for your time and consideration regarding this very urgent and important matter.

Sincerely,

SDRA, the San Diego Rabbinic Assembly