

From: Shlomo Frieman  
Sent: Friday, August 9, 2019 2:21 PM  
To: CFIRD  
Cc: Ethnic Studies  
Subject: Proposed Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC)

To Whom It May Concern:

I am deeply troubled by the proposed California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) and alarmed that if AB 331 is approved by the California state legislature in the coming days, every high school student in the state will be required to take an ethnic studies course based on the proposed ESMC before graduating. It is shocking that the proposed ESMC omits information about American Jews and anti-Semitism, uses classic anti-Semitic stereotypes, and is blatantly anti-Israel. Furthermore, the proposed ESMC erases the American Jewish experience, fails to discuss anti-Semitism, reinforces negative stereotypes about Jews, singles out Israel for criticism, and would institutionalize the teaching of anti-Semitic stereotypes in California's public schools.

In addition, the proposed ESMC highlights a much deeper and graver problem, namely, the hijacking of an educational curriculum by those pushing a political and hateful agenda. If not addressed, this problem threatens to undermine not only the current effort to develop an ethnic studies model curriculum, but all other curricular efforts undertaken by the Department of Education. In order to prevent such abuse and the extremely harmful consequences ensue from it, safeguards must be put in place before any state-mandated curriculum is adopted for use in California classrooms. The anti-Jewish, anti-Israel bias of the proposed ESMC curriculum — including its implicit portrayal of Jews and Israel as part of "interlocking systems of oppression and privilege" and its endorsement of the anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement as a form of "direct action" or "resistance" that students are encouraged to engage in — clearly exposes the politically motivated and directed nature of the curriculum and its drafters. Not surprisingly, more than one-quarter of the Model Curriculum Advisory Committee members, appointed by the State Board of Education to draft the ESMC, have publicly expressed animus towards Israel and its supporters, with some members openly supporting BDS. Clearly, these committee members have used the state-mandated curriculum as a tool for politically indoctrinating California's high school students with anti-Israel propaganda and encouraging them to engage in political activism against the Jewish state. As an educator and school administrator, you should surely be aware of the dangers of allowing political indoctrination to substitute for rigorous scholarship and quality pedagogy. In the case of the proposed ESMC, such political indoctrination impedes the flow of objective information about a complex topic of global importance and deprives students of critical knowledge for adequately understanding their community, their state, their country, and the world. This was not what state legislators had in mind when they approved AB 2016 mandating the development of "a model curriculum in ethnic studies" for use in California high schools, with the primary objective of "preparing pupils to be global citizens with an appreciation for the contributions of multiple cultures." Indeed, the political indoctrination at the heart of the proposed ESMC does the exact opposite.

Moreover, considerable evidence shows that the kind of anti-Zionist propaganda and activism promoted in the proposed ESMC is strongly linked to acts of anti-Jewish hostility. For example, studies of anti-Semitic activity on college and university campuses across the country have consistently shown that schools with anti-Zionist expression and activity, including the promotion of BDS, are about three times

more likely to host incidents targeting Jewish students for harm, including acts of harassment, vandalism and assault. Therefore, implementation of a model curriculum that includes the promulgation of such political, ethnic or religious hatred can't help but threaten the safety and well-being of Jewish and pro-Israel high school students in the state. Furthermore, California college and university campuses, already reeling from the alarming number of anti-Zionist-motivated acts of aggression perpetrated against their Jewish and pro-Israel students, will undoubtedly see dramatic increases in these anti-Semitic acts with the influx of the state's high school graduates.

Accordingly, the proposed ESMC must be drastically revised or completely re-written.

In addition, unless and until safeguards are put in place for ensuring that drafters will not be permitted to use model curriculums to promote political, ethnic or religious enmity towards any group, or to weaponize high school students to take action based on such enmity, whatever model curriculum is adopted by the IQC will have an enormously negative impact on California's high schools, colleges and universities for years to come. Therefore, for the benefit of all Californians, please promptly address this consequential problem by establishing safeguards for ensuring all state-sponsored curricula and other instructional materials are never created or used as tools of political indoctrination that promote hatred and incite harm against any race, religion, group or individual.

Your vigilance and cooperation will benefit all Californians.

All the best,  
Shlomo Frieman