

August 8, 2019

Soomin Chao  
Chair of the Instructional Quality Commission  
California Department of Education  
1430N St, Suite 3207  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Shoomin Chao;

I am outraged by the anti-Semitism and anti-Israel position presented in the proposed Ethnic Minority Curriculum. In summary, the proposed California curriculum intentionally excludes Jews as an ethnic group that has faced oppression; presents a one-sided narrative of the only Jewish state; and provides a mouthpiece for the bigoted BDS movement.

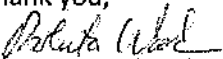
The proposed curriculum section on "Arab American Studies Course Outline" contains a number of passages concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, such as "Direct Action Front for Palestine and Black Lives Matter," "Call to Boycott, Divest, and Sanction Israel" and "Comparative Border Studies: Palestine and Mexico." It also includes studying national figures such as Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.), Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-Mich.), the late Columbia University professor Edward Said, Women's March leader Linda Sarsour, the late radio personality Casey Kasem, actress Alia Shawkat and the late White House correspondent Helen Thomas—all of whom are associated with anti-Semitic and anti-Israel rhetoric, and in the case of the congresswomen, a push to enact legislation punishing Israel.

According to the sample course models, students also are introduced to concepts like the nakba, defined from Arabic as "the catastrophe," which is used to describe the establishment of the Jewish State of Israel in May 1948 and the displacement of Arabs that occurred. In addition, included songs and their lyrics are also very anti-Israel and anti-Semitic. This is one sided and ahistorical and does nothing to foster coexistence among minorities and other groups. In fact it is a compilation of Palestinian talking points falsehoods, whose leaders have institutionalized victimhood as their core identity. All this comes at a time when many Arabs from the Gulf are beginning to normalize their interaction with the Jewish world, including Israelis. Any curriculum should focus on all Arab nations and celebrate those that have religious tolerance as a norm, like Bahrain—not, unfortunately, the Palestinian Authority. All of this section needs to be scrapped, period. Unless your goal is to increase anti-Israel and anti-Semitism.

California needs to offer its students an opportunity to understand fully the role of ethnicity, race and religion in the life of all its citizens, especially those previously ignored. The proposed curriculum mischaracterizes Jewish history and identity, especially Mizrahi Jews, who comprise a significant portion of the state's Jewish population; neglects the history and scope of anti-Semitism; and demonizes the State of Israel.

In addition the resolution AB-331 requiring a semester of the curriculum should not be enacted. The ethnic minority curriculum should be an elective. It is wrong for valuable class time would be used as a requirement for all California high school students.

Thank you,

  
Roberta Wolk