



Center for Empowering Refugees & Immigrants

Instructional Quality Commission
California Department of Education
Curriculum Frameworks and Instructional Resources Division
430 N Street, Suite 3207
Sacramento, CA 95814

September 30, 2020

Dear California Department of Education Instructional Quality Commission,

We are Mona Afary, Ph.D - Executive Director and Elijah Chhum - Outreach Worker from the Center for Empowering Refugees and Immigrants (CERI) based in Oakland, CA. We support the Asian Pacific Islander School Board Members Association (APISBMA) position that the following revisions be made to the third draft of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) to be presented to the IQC in November 2020:

1. Restore lesson plans on Cambodian Americans and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (as a pan-ethnic group) that were present in the July 2019 draft, specifically curricula on:
 - a. Myths and Realities Surrounding the Asian Pacific Islander American Community
 - b. Cambodian Americans – Deportation Breaking Families Apart
2. At a minimum, include additional lesson plans for Japanese Americans, Korean Americans, Vietnamese Americans, and Asian Indian Americans. These ethnic groups represent some of the largest Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) ethnic groups according to 2010 Census data.

CERI is a community mental health organization based in Oakland, CA who has been funded by Alameda County Mental Health Behavioral Services for the past 10 years. We are committed to improve the psychological, physical and economicals well-being of immigrants and refugees through support groups, counseling and community building. We offer wrap-around services that are humanistic, strength-based, culturally-relevant and intergenerational. To break cycles of

violence and silence and to dismantle organized abandonment we have created a space to have an open dialogue within the community. We work alongside formerly incarcerated communities and families impacted by deportation.

We stand for Southeast Asian Ethnic Studies curricula because we understand to bridge the education gap and to inspire new hope in the Southeast Asian community, we must understand who we are and how we came to be. Assimilating into American culture was the method to survive, but our 2nd and 3rd generation of Southeast Asian youths are still impacted by violence and are less achieving in academics than other Asian communities. Learning our history and the politics that caused the diaspora will shed light on the trauma intergenerational that the 1st, 1.5, 2nd, and 3rd generation of Southeast Asian communities still endure. Our communities have suffered in silence long enough and to break this silence we must build a foundational framework to hold us, affirm us and support us. This framework can be through Ethnic Studies and this must include Cambodian and Laotian Studies.

The “Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies” unit must offer the foundational overview of the AAPI pan-ethnic identity, include the full spectrum of the AAPI community, and align with the expansive CDE vision imagined in Chapter 3. I urge you to protect and improve the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum and reach out to AAPI community stakeholders to review lesson content for authenticity and prior to submission to the IQC in November.

Let us heal, learn and thrive as a Southeast Asian community together. We appreciate your time and please call us or email us with any further questions. Mona Afary, mona.afary@cerieastbay.org, 510-684-7386, and Elijah Chhum, elijah.chhum@cerieastbay.org, 612-801-3853.

Sincerely,

Mona Afary and Elijah Chhum

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