

**From:** Shaher Ahmad

**Sent:** Wednesday, November 11, 2020 1:42 PM

**To:** Ethnic Studies <EthnicStudies@cde.ca.gov>; Superintendent; [email redacted]

**Cc:** [email redacted]

**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Arab-American studies curriculum

Dear Sir or Madam,

The size of a lobby group and their influence should not be a determining factor in blocking the truth and depriving students of learning it.

Pro-Israel interest groups should not define antisemitism. Criticism of a government is not a discrimination against the religion of its people. Politics and religion should not mix, last time I checked! Definitions that name criticism of Israel as antisemitic are opposed by many Jewish organizations, both within the United States and internationally and violate our constitutional right to free speech because their application censors virtually all criticism of Israel and advocacy for Palestinian human rights and equality. These definitions also downplay the main source of antisemitism in the United States, which is white nationalism.

**ANTISEMITISM IS:** discrimination against, violence towards, or stereotypes of **Jews for being Jewish.**

We know, from the demands for racial justice sweeping this county, that it is offensive and dangerous to shunt the histories and perspectives of people of color to the sidelines. These revisions are tone-deaf to the political moment we are living in.

Our children, Arab kids, are once again being left to fend for themselves in an increasingly racialized and polarized political climate. California should be a sanctuary, not a place of danger for our students and their families. Shame on you!

Young people in particular face the consequences of Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism. Arab and Muslim youth are simultaneously **marginalized** and **targeted**.

For too long, Arab youth have learned little about their history besides offensive and racist images and stereotypes. Arab-American studies curriculum provides a critical intervention to these stereotypes in K-12 education

Please do the right thing and reconsider.

Regards,

Shaher Ahmad

[phone number redacted]