



The Honorable Tony Thurmond
Superintendent of Public Instruction
California Department of Education
1430 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-5901

August 21, 2020

Dear Superintendent Thurmond,

In light of recent events, JIMENA would like to share four core principles that we ask you to consider in the development of the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum. We believe these principles will be vitally important in producing an Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum that is representative, equitable and free of bias.

- 1) **California's diverse Middle Eastern populations should be fairly and equitably represented. As you know, JIMENA has simply asked** the California Department of Education to follow the State Board's standards and guidelines, which require the curriculum to be balanced and portray peoples proportionately if they are represented. Therefore, if Arab Americans are included in the curriculum, the ESMC should also include Mizrahi Jews and [other Middle Eastern and North African \(MENA\) groups](#) as part of the "broadly defined umbrella of Asian Studies". Non-Arab Middle Easterners – which account for more than 60% of California's MENA population – have built a broad coalition called [Advocates for Inclusive Middle Eastern Education \(AIMEE\)](#) to ensure that our stories are told.
- 2) **The State of California must uphold its promise of transparency and public input in reviewing the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.** We are deeply troubled by the CDE's recommendation that the public will not be allowed their rightful opportunity to review and comment on any new Arab American Studies lesson plan or content to be added to the curriculum, per standard procedure as defined in AB2016.
- 3) **We believe it is critical that the curriculum focuses on the lived experiences of communities here in the United States of America.** As the only Jewish organization which provided the California Department of Education with a comprehensive lesson plan for inclusion in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, JIMENA's focus is sharing the lived experiences of Middle Eastern and North African Jews in North America, many of whom have been racialized and have experienced one of the worst forms of bigotry – antisemitism. Our lesson plan, "[Antisemitism and Middle Eastern-American Jews](#)" centers Mizrahi Jews' experiences in a lesson plan on antisemitism in the United States.

- 4) **The State of California must draw clear redlines against antisemitism and discrimination.** The Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum must not include the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement, and other highly politicized conversations about Middle Eastern conflicts that create unsafe classrooms for Jewish and Middle Eastern minority students throughout California.

Thank you,

Gina Bublil-Waldman, President
Sarah Levin, Executive Director

cc.
Governor Gavin Newsom
State Board of Education President Linda Darling-Hammond
Chief Deputy Superintendent Stephanie Gregson