

September 16, 2019

**The Honorable Tony Thurmond**  
**California Superintendent of Public Instruction**

California Department of Education  
1430 N Street, Suite 5602  
Sacramento, CA 95814-5901

Dear Superintendent Thurmond,

The undersigned members of the **Armenian American School Board Association** strongly urge that the Armenian American experience be included in the proposed California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.

Armenians have had a long history of immigration to the United States and experiences of racialization and marginalization, similar to many other immigrant communities and ethnic and linguistic minorities. From the early immigration of Armenians to the Central Valley as refugees of the genocide of the Ottoman Empire, to the emigration of Armenians from the former Soviet Union, the Republic of Armenia, Iran and war-torn countries such as Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq, Armenians make up a significant ethnic group in California. In fact, California currently has the largest population of Armenians in the world outside of Armenia. For this reason, it is imperative that Armenian American students see themselves as part of the larger California community and see their experiences reflected in the California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.

The Armenian-American experience in the United States has grappled with issues of refugeehood, erasure, immigration, and marginalization. Many Armenian American students are immigrants, children of immigrants and English Language Learners. They have been subjected to discriminatory practices and what Dr. Angela Valenzuela calls as “subtractive schooling”- assimilation through deculturalization. Most of us Armenian American school board members have had these same experiences when we ourselves were students in California public schools.

As educators and school board members, we understand the importance of having students see themselves, their histories and identities reflected and affirmed in the curriculum. Also, we believe that it is important for all students to learn about the experiences of other racial and ethnic groups to build tolerance, mutual respect, and understanding. We strongly support the Model Ethnic Studies Curriculum but we insist that the Armenian American experience be included in a meaningful way.

We would be glad to provide you with the names and contact information of scholars who are working in this field and who would be willing to help write the Armenian American portion of the Model Curriculum.

We thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Suzie Abajian  
School Board President  
South Pasadena Unified School District

Dr. Armond Aghakhanian  
School Board Vice President  
Burbank Unified School District

Dr. Armina Gharpetian  
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[www.armenianschoolboard.org](http://www.armenianschoolboard.org)