

From: Sameena Usman

Sent: Wednesday, May 27, 2020 8:40 PM

To: [emails redacted]

Cc: [emails redacted]; Ethnic Studies

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Support the CA Model Curriculum that includes Arab American Studies in Asian American studies

Dear Members of the Oakland Board of Education,

My name is Sameena Usman and I am the Government Relations Coordinator for the Bay Area office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

I am writing to urge the Board to support the ethnic studies model curriculum and inclusion of Arab American studies. Hatred stems from fear, and fear stems from lack of education. There is a lot of misinformation or lack of understanding about Arab Americans which has likely resulted in the increase in hate incidences and bullying in schools, which is why it is critical to have an Arab American Studies program that is included in the CA Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.

CAIR is the nation's largest Muslim civil liberties group whose mission is to enhance the understanding of Islam, promote civil rights, promote justice and empower American Muslims. We receive numerous reports from students who have been harassed and bullied because they are Muslim or perceived to be Muslim. [Every other year we survey](#) Muslims from across California to ask about their experiences in middle and high school. In our last report, of the 1,500 students we surveyed, we found that 40% of the respondents were bullied for being Muslim, which is double the national statistic. We found that 29% reported offensive comments from teachers, administrators, and other officials. This is very concerning given that teachers set the environment for the classroom.

While not all Muslims are Arab, and not all Arabs are Muslims, we truly believe that an Arab American Studies program that is incorporated in Asian American Studies in the model Ethnic Studies curriculum would be essential to protecting our students from harassment and bullying.

Please support the CA Model Curriculum for Oakland USD. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Take care,
Sameena

Sameena Usman

Government Relations Coordinator

Council on American-Islamic Relations

San Francisco Bay Area Office