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August 11, 2020

Dear Governor Newsom, Instructional Quality Commission, and the California Department of Education and State Board of Education,

Thank you for serving our students. I write to you today as a professor in the Chicana/o Studies Department at the University of California at Davis to express **my very strong disapproval** of the revised California Ethnic Studies Curriculum. The revised curriculum does not embody the framework, principles, pedagogy, nor methodology of Ethnic Studies.

Ethnic studies courses facilitate and promote the cultivation of critical thinking and problem solving, civic and cultural awareness, collaboration, adaptability, and resilience through a curriculum that is centered on the perspectives of historically marginalized groups. Ethnic studies, as a discipline, centers on the study of systems of power and domination. The pedagogy embodied in Ethnic Studies is one that necessitates culturally responsive teaching and encourages students to seek pathways for their communities to break from systems of oppression and inequity.

Researchers agree that the academic and social impact of Ethnic Studies on students is important and significant. According to the National Education Association, students taking Ethnic Studies courses connect with their lived experience, their engagement at school increases, as do their literacy skills, as well as their achievement and attitudes toward learning¹. Similarly, according to a Stanford study², high school students at risk of dropping out that took a course examining the roles of race, nationality and culture on identity and experience all improved their academic performance and attendance.

I urge you to not approve the revised model curriculum as it is not in alignment with Ethnic Studies. I also urge you to reinstate the advisory committee, which was composed of expert practitioners from the field of Ethnic Studies, and continue the work toward creating a curriculum that will honor our voices, struggles, framework and pedagogy.

The revised curriculum, as is, promotes the banking method of learning/teaching, and minimizes and undervalues the voices of historically marginalized groups in California (i.e., Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, immigrants from the Northern Triangle, and Arab Americans) and around the globe (i.e., Palestinians).

¹ <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/NBI-2010-3-value-of-ethnic-studies.pdf>

² <http://inid.gse.uci.edu/files/2011/03/DeePenner2016AERJThe-causaleffectsofculturalrelevance.pdf>

In addition, the revised curriculum promotes a multicultural framework and assumes that social justice and equity will be achieved with tolerance and by having more diverse people in positions of power. The current revised curriculum contest historically marginalized groups' ancestral knowledge and perpetuates a deficit perspective about our communities. The revised curriculum promotes a deficit perspective by replicating the majoritarian and master narrative of our communities, that is one that does not see or value our history, agency, self-determination, self-empowerment and strategies for understanding and dismantling systems of oppression.

There is a saying, "As California Goes, so goes the nation." Thus, I urge you to continue the work towards a model curriculum that is truly in alignment with Ethnic Studies as it will shape the academic engagement and achievement not only of our youth but of the nation. Given all my concerns, I call for members of the California Department of Education and State Board of Education to disapprove the revised Model Curriculum as is.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to call me at 530-220-5582 or email me: ndeebsossa@ucdavis.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Natalia Deeb-Sossa". The script is cursive and somewhat informal.

Natalia Deeb-Sossa
Professor
Chicana/o Studies Department
University of California at Davis