

From: Sarah Burch
Sent: Friday, July 10, 2020 10:16 AM
To: Ethnic Studies
Cc: [emails redacted]; Superintendent
Subject: [EXTERNAL] ESMC revisions public comment

To whom it may concern:

My name is Sarah Burch, and I am writing in support of the preservation of the ESMC. As a student in California, it is abundantly clear to me how important Ethnic Studies is. The entire state is intrinsically shaped by the state's ethnic diversity and the inter- and intra-communal relationships among different groups of people. To grow up in California without an Ethnic Studies curriculum is to receive a glaringly incomplete education, to lack an understanding of oneself, and to be unprepared to be a kind, empathetic, and helpful citizen anywhere in the world. There is all kinds of incorrect, damaging, and hateful information out in the world being imparted to kids through news and social media. This is a given, and the only responsible thing for the state school system to do is to provide students with the resources to formulate their own critical thinking skills about their own and other communities, and how the inequalities in our state, our country, and our world cannot be understood without the framework of Ethnic Studies.

I fully support the ESMC, including Arab American studies, which is a crucial part of understanding both California and the entire world. Arab Americans face constant Islamophobic and xenophobic violence in this state, and one hugely important way to counter the violent narratives towards Arab Americans found in the news media is to fully fund the ESMC, including Arab American studies. For similar reasons, it is important to include West Asian American experiences in the ESMC, and to make sure that ethnic studies represents ALL the communities in California school systems. This is also why it is crucial that the experiences of Palestinians, both their history and their current struggles for justice, are fully and accurately represented in the ESMC curriculum. As a Jewish student, it is incredibly painful to see people weaponizing allegations of antisemitism against the teaching of Palestinian history and struggle. The existence of a people in their land and their fight for self-determination and against colonial rule is in line with my principles as a Jew, not something that is discriminatory. It is extremely important that the ESMC curriculum not elide the difference between Zionism and Judaism, or anti-Zionism and antisemitism, as they are distinctly different and it is dangerous to conflate the two. Finally, I demand that any revisions that affect Arab American studies be made alongside Arab American instructors and Ethnic Studies scholars. It seems to me to be incredibly self-evident why it is important to have experts in the subject work on the subject's curriculum, but it appears that this has not been occurring.

The California Board of Education's IQC needs to place the best interest of all its students above the sinister and politically driven intervention into the ESMC. I implore the IQC to listen to all of those calling for an inclusive revisions process, including Arab American scholars, community members, and organizations joining in solidarity like California Chapters of Black Lives Matter and Bay Area Jewish Voice for Peace. It is necessary that Arab American studies and West Asian studies be fully included in the ESMC, including Palestinian history and politics, and that all revisions to the curriculum which involve Arab American studies involve practitioners of that discipline.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sarah Burch