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The Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust



November 18, 2019

The Honorable Tony Thurmond
State Superintendent of Public Instruction
State Board of Education
1430 N Street, Room 5602
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Superintendent Thurmond:

The Jewish Public Affairs Committee of California (JPAC) recognizes the value of Ethnic Studies and the research demonstrating its benefits on students. JPAC is the largest single-state coalition of Jewish organizations in the nation. We advocate in Sacramento on behalf of our members, which are comprised of Jewish Federations, Jewish Community Relations Councils, Jewish Family Service agencies, and many other California-based Jewish organizations.

We appreciate the long history and struggle to teach Ethnic Studies at the K-12 level. We also recognize there are differing philosophical approaches to teaching Ethnic Studies and believe the state has an important decision to make about how it will go about this important undertaking. Indeed, on July 23, 2019 JPAC submitted a letter to the IQC that included a thorough review of the model curriculum and recommendations for modifications. We recognize that at the university-level, Ethnic Studies has had a traditional focus on four groups: African Americans, Latinx/Chicanx Americans, Native Americans, and Asian Americans. However, the initial draft of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum illustrated a different philosophy that broadened the focus to include additional ethnic groups. This seemed in keeping with the call for inclusion in the ESMC Guidelines and with the definition of Ethnic Studies considered by the Legislature in AB 2016.

We wish to reiterate that the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Guidelines require the curriculum to:

- “Be written in language that is inclusive and supportive of multiple users”
- “Encourage cultural understanding of how different groups have struggled and worked together, highlighting core ethnic studies concepts such as consciousness raising and knowledge building, identity development and self-determination, justice and social change, and love, respect”
 - “Be inclusive by creating space for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, or citizenship to learn different perspectives”

JPAC expects transparency from the California Department of Education and the Instructional Quality Commission on the re-development of the Ethnic Studies Model

Curriculum. In light of the creation of the Ethnic Studies Panel and its recent hearing in Sacramento on October 15, 2019, we wish to reiterate the following:

1. The Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum should include Antisemitism in discussions of hate crimes, bias, prejudice, and stereotyping and be listed explicitly.
2. The final Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum must remove all derogatory references or biased descriptions of Jews, Judaism, Israel, and Israelis. The Institute for Curriculum (ICS) Services' review submitted by JPAC during the public comment period details the issues and provides tangible recommendations. ICS is available as a resource to CDE during the redesign process.
3. If the State retains the expanded coverage of ethnic groups as seen in the first draft of the model curriculum (Chapter 2), then Jewish Americans should be appropriately and respectfully included.

Additionally, JPAC and our partner organizations specifically request your response to the following:

1. Has the CDE and IQC determined the philosophical approach to Ethnic Studies and how the term will be defined?
2. How does the answer to the above question conform to AB 2016 and the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Guidelines?
3. What is the new Ethnic Studies panel's specific timeline for action and revision?
4. How is the State acknowledging and utilizing the detailed public comments it received this summer in the process moving forward?

Thank you for your commitment to accurate and representative education for all California students. We appreciate your timely attention to this matter. We look forward to participating in the process and appreciate the opportunity to provide input.

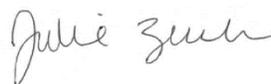
Sincerely,



Lynn Bunim
JPAC Chairwoman



Cliff Berg
Legislative Advocate



Julie Zeisler
Executive Director, JPAC