

November 4, 2019

Superintendent Tony Thurmond
State Superintendent of Public Instruction
California Department of Education
1430 N. Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond
President
State Board of Education
1430 N. Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Superintendent Thurmond and State Board President Darling-Hammond,

California high school students deserve an opportunity to learn the role of ethnicity, race and religion in the life of all of its citizens, including those previously ignored.

The draft Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum would not achieve that goal. It lacks multicultural competency and nuance. It advances a narrow scope of study and does not reflect California's diverse population.

AB 2016, authored by former Assemblymember Luis Alejo, was approved by the California state legislature and signed by Governor Brown in September 2016.

AB 2016 notes that *"the model curriculum shall be written as a guide to allow school districts to adapt their courses to reflect the pupil demographics in their communities."* The draft curriculum does not meet this requirement set forth in the law.

Some supporters of the current draft curriculum note that ethnic studies traditionally has been and should continue to be about African-Americans, Native Americans, Latinos/Chicanos, and Asian-Americans. However, the draft curriculum includes more than the aforementioned communities. **If the curriculum is committed to including the experiences of ethnic groups beyond these four groups, then those drafting the curriculum should not be allowed to cherry-pick communities without public scrutiny.**

The four communities should be highlighted, given their past experiences of systematic marginalization and oppression. In that spirit, the historically ignored and overlooked multi-generational experiences of the minority communities, including those of Armenians, Assyrians, Hellenes, Hindus, Koreans, and Mizrahi, Sephardic, and Ashkenazi Jews, and others, should also be taught. Inclusiveness should be a paramount principle.

Specifically, the curriculum should incorporate the experiences of demographically significant communities across California whose cultural, economic, and civic contributions to the benefit of the state has been historically overlooked.

Since the model curriculum is intended to help districts implement courses, we believe offering additional sample course models will best meet the goals laid out in AB 2016 and in the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Guidelines.

Moving forward, we hope to see more transparency and less political bias in both the development of the curriculum and the appointment of individuals to the relevant bodies involved in the process.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Richard S. Hirschhaut
Los Angeles Director
American Jewish Committee



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President
American Hellenic Council



Rabbi Serena Eisenberg
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