



CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS

455 NORTH REXFORD DRIVE ▪ BEVERLY HILLS, CALIFORNIA 90210

Lester J. Friedman, Mayor

January 20, 2021

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

Re: Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum
City of Beverly Hills – OPPOSE

Dear Superintendent Thurmond,

On behalf of the City of Beverly Hills, I write to you in strong OPPOSITION to the current draft of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC). The current draft of the ESMC demonstrates a clear anti-Jewish bias that at times borders on antisemitism. The ESMC, through its inclusion of Anti-Semitic stereotypes, fails to touch on the American Jewish experience and antisemitism.

California is an extraordinarily ethnically diverse state. It is important to ensure California's students learn about the state's ethnic diversity and how that diversity has contributed to this history of this state. The current draft of the ESMC negates this noble and worthwhile goal by selectively choosing to effectively omit the history, struggle, and contributions of Jews to the state of California. The lack of inclusion of the American Jewish experience in the draft ESMC is suggestive of an anti-Jewish bias that is antithetical for ethnic studies coursework, which is meant to teach California's students of the various racial and ethnic groups in the state.

One of the more egregious aspects of the ESMC is the exclusion of any meaningful discussion of Anti-Semitism in its study of hate crimes, white supremacy, bias, prejudice, and discrimination. This blind spot in the ESCM is disturbing, especially given the recent rise in white nationalist and Anti-Semitic violence across the country and the state. While the ESMC Glossary rightfully includes "Islamophobia" among several other forms of discrimination, its failure to include Anti-Semitism as well, is cause for deep concern.

The anti-Jewish bias in the ESMC is also on clear display in its promotion of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement and its one-sided disparagement of Israel. The BDS movement is seen by many in the Jewish community as hostile to Jews, Israelis, and Israeli-

Americans. Promoting such a problematic movement focused on international affairs in a curriculum that is meant to focus on domestic civil rights movements is not only inappropriate but when it is seemingly done at the expense of another ethnic minority group it is deeply offensive.

The ESMC as currently drafted marginalizes the Jewish community and casts aside their longstanding contributions to California's history and the diverse nature of this state. Failing to include meaningful discussions surrounding the hate and discrimination the Jewish community faces would fail California's Jewish students who would be deprived of having their unique experiences and ethnic identity reflected in the course curriculum. Furthermore, the ESMC's exclusion of the Jewish American experience denies California's non-Jewish students the opportunity to learn and understand the plight of American Jews and the bigotry and discrimination they experience.

Additionally, the current draft of the curriculum celebrates figures who have promoted anti-Semitism (including leaders of the Third World Liberation Front and the anti-Jewish leaders they admire); it uses racial distinctions to divide people into those who are considered white (and therefore privileged) and those who are non-white (and therefore oppressed); and in the case of Jews, it combines the two, pitting "Jews of color" against Jews who are tarred with "conditional whiteness" and its attendant "racial privilege."

The City of Beverly Hills has a history of condemning Anti-Semitic behavior, including passing a resolution to oppose the United Nations Resolution to deny Jewish historical and religious claims to the Temple Mount and the Western Wall in Jerusalem. Additionally, the City passed a resolution in 2016 to support Assembly Bill 2844 (Bloom), which required companies that contract with state and local agencies to certify that they do not engage in discriminatory boycotts against foreign countries, including the nation and people of Israel. More recently, our City condemned Airbnb for their pro-BDS actions taken against Israel.

For these reasons, the City of Beverly Hills firmly opposes the current draft of the ESMC. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Lester J. Friedman

Mayor, City of Beverly Hills

cc: The Honorable Ben Allen, 26th Senate District
The Honorable Richard Bloom, 50th Assembly District
Andrew K. Antwih, Shaw Yoder Antwih Schmelzer & Lange