

Letter to California State Board of Education President from 88 Organizations

SENT VIA EMAIL

July 14, 2020

Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond
State Board President
California State Board of Education
1430 N Street, Room 5111
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Dr. Darling-Hammond,

We are a coalition of 88 organizations with hundreds of thousands of members and supporters, many of them residents of California. We are keenly aware of the enormous challenges currently facing the state's educational system, and we are deeply grateful for all that the State Board of Education is doing to ensure the continuity and quality of education for California's K-12 students.

Most of our organizations wrote to the California Department of Education (CDE) last summer to express our serious concerns about the politically-charged nature of the AB 2016-mandated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum, which sought to indoctrinate students into a highly controversial and divisive set of ideological beliefs that we feared would exacerbate ethnic divisions and foment bigotry in California schools. Especially now, as our country and state grapple with ways to come together to address unacceptable inequality and injustice and unite against hate and bigotry, it is more important than ever that our state's first high school ethnic studies curriculum provides an opportunity to help students understand the difficult challenges facing our communities and promotes mutual respect, civility and unity.

Sadly, the initial draft curriculum failed on all of those fronts, and we greatly appreciate that you publicly acknowledged the draft's inadequacies last summer. In response to the outpouring of criticism about the initial draft from more than 19,000 California citizens and organizations, state legislators and the Governor, you immediately reassured Californians, stating, "A model curriculum should be accurate, free of bias, appropriate for all learners in our diverse state, and align with Governor Newsom's vision of a California for all. The current draft model curriculum falls short and needs to be substantially redesigned." You also announced a comprehensive revision process and designated officials to begin working on a new draft model curriculum, which we understand will be available for public comment in the fall. We eagerly await those revisions.

We have learned, however, of an on-going deceptive campaign by former members of the original Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Advisory Committee (ESMCAC) to circumvent the legislatively-prescribed revision process and ensure that the first draft, which ESMCAC members helped develop, will be implemented in California schools with as little oversight as possible. Over the past few months, these individuals, who call themselves "Save CA Ethnic Studies," have attempted to

take advantage of state and local education officials' focus on addressing the COVID-19 crisis to get school boards throughout the state to rubber-stamp, with little or no discussion, a resolution that "affirms support of the California Ethnic Studies Model Draft" and "support[s] the work of the Save CA Ethnic Studies Coalition". In addition, the more recent version of the resolution has school boards committing "to move forward a plan and timeline" to train high school teachers in the model curriculum, as well as to "adapt the curriculum for middle school and elementary school grades."

School board members asked to vote on the resolution are not shown the original draft curriculum, and not informed about the enormous outpouring of criticism it engendered or that a CDE process is well underway for the curriculum's redesign. Instead, board members are led to believe that in voting for the resolution they are showing support for AB 2016 and affirming the importance of ethnic studies classes in general, rather than endorsing the highly controversial draft curriculum that was condemned by dozens of state leaders and tens of thousands of Californians. As a result of this organized campaign, several school boards have already approved the disingenuous resolution, with more expected in the future.

The Save CA Ethnic Studies campaign has promulgated a plethora of misinformation and sown a great deal of confusion among school board members and school district residents. **We therefore urge you to issue an official statement pointing out the misguided and premature nature of these resolutions and urging district school board members to wait until the state's revision process is completed before affirming support for the high school ethnic studies model curriculum or considering whether and how to implement it in their district.**

Thank you, now more than ever, for your leadership during this challenging time.

Sincerely,

Academic Council for Israel
Alpha Epsilon Pi Fraternity (AEPi)
Alums for Campus Fairness - National
Alums for Campus Fairness - UC Davis
Alums for Campus Fairness - UC Riverside
Alums for Campus Fairness - UCLA
AMCHA Initiative
America Israel Cooperative Enterprise
American Council of Trustees and Alumni
American Institute for Jewish Research
American Jewish International Relations Institute
American Truth Project
American Zionist Movement
Americans Fighting Antisemitism
Americans for Peace and Tolerance
B'nai B'rith International

BEAR: Bias Education, Advocacy & Resources
Bobcats for Israel at Ohio University
Boston Israel Action Committee
Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law
Bulldogs for Israel (Brooklyn College)
California Association of Scholars
Campus Anti-Semitism Task Force of the North Shore
Center for Combating Antisemitism
Chovevei Zion
Christians and Jews United for Israel
Club Z
Coalition for Jewish Values
Combat Anti-Semitism Movement
Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America (CAMERA)
Conference of Jewish Affairs
Davis Faculty for Israel
Eagles Wings
Endowment for Middle East Truth (EMET)
Facts and Logic About the Middle East (FLAME)
Grandchildren of Holocaust Survivors
Hasbara Fellowships
Herut North America
Institute for Black Solidarity with Israel
Iranian American Jewish Federation
Iranian Jewish Women's Organization
Israel in NYC
Israel Matters
Israel on Campus Coalition
Israel Peace Initiative (IPI)
Israeli-American Civic Action Network
Israeli-American Civic Education Institute
Israeli-American Council (IAC)
JAM
Jewish American Affairs Committee of Indiana
Jewish War Veterans of the USA
Legal Insurrection Foundation
Magshimey Herut
Middle East Forum
Middle East Political and Information Network (MEPIN)
National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel
National Jewish Advocacy Center
NCSY
NH4Israel
North Carolina Coalition for Israel
Proclaiming Justice to the Nations
Rabbinical Alliance of America

Rhode Island Coalition for Israel
Ruach Fund (Real Estate Against Crimes of Hate)
Russian Jewish Community Foundation
San Diego Asian Americans for Equality
Scholars for Peace in the Middle East
Simon Wiesenthal Center
StandWithUs
StandWithUs Saidoff Legal Department
Stop Anti-Semitism Now
Stop BDS on Campus
Students and Parents Against Campus Anti-Semitism
Students Supporting Israel National
Students Supporting Israel at Columbia
Students Supporting Israel at Drake University
Students Supporting Israel at UCLA
Students Supporting Israel of Santa Monica College
Swarthmore Alumni Against Antisemitism on Campus
The Israel Christian Nexus
The Israel Group
The Lawfare Project
Tufts Friends of Israel
WoMen Fight AntiSemitism
World Jewish Congress North America
Young Jewish Conservatives
Zachor Legal Institute
Zionist Organization of America

Cc:

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond
California Chief Deputy of Public Instruction Stephanie Gregson
California State Board of Education Executive Director Karen Stapf Walters
California Senator Connie M. Leyva, Chair Standing Committee on Education
California Assemblymember Patrick O'Donnell, Chair, State Assembly Committee on Education
California Senator Allen - member of the IQC, Chair of the Jewish Legislative Caucus
California Assemblymember Shirley Weber - member of the IQC, Chair of the State Assembly Select Committee on Campus Climate
California Governor Gavin Newsom
California Governor's Chief of Staff Ann O'Leary