

April 27, 2021

The Honorable Lorena Gonzalez
Chair, Assembly Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Room 2114
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 101 (Medina) – Oppose

Dear Chair Gonzalez and Members of the Assembly Committee on Appropriations,

We are seven California-based organizations deeply concerned about the enormously harmful impact that AB 101 - the bill making a course in ethnic studies a graduation requirement in all public and charter high schools in the state - would have on our students and our state.

As you are aware, the COVID-19 pandemic has been responsible for a catastrophic loss of instruction for millions of K-12 students in the state. One [study](#) by researchers at Stanford University found that just during the early stages of the pandemic, children lost an average of 116 days of reading time and 215 days of math work, and that recovery from these losses could take years and require a massive infusion of state funds. And this analysis only examined March to June 2020 and does not account for nearly one additional year of virtual learning in the 2020 – 2021 school year.

However, instead of directing essential educational funding to help students recover from these devastating educational losses in foundational subjects such as Math, Science and English, AB 101 would divert an enormous amount of taxpayer funds into courses that have not been shown to benefit students academically, and may even harm them.

Consider that an [estimated budget](#) for the first four years of rolling out an ethnic studies graduation requirement in every LAUSD high school, which was approved by the district's Director of Budget Services and Financial Planning in 2015, put the cost at about \$73 million dollars. While that figure included a pilot program and other costs that were unique to LAUSD's proposed implementation, it is reasonable to use the budget to estimate how much a statewide ethnic studies graduation requirement could cost California taxpayers. The largest one-time cost in the budget is for the purchase of textbooks, which is estimated at \$150 per student. Assuming that AB 101-mandated ethnic studies classes would be taught in the 9th grade, as the LAUSD budget assumes, the procurement of ethnic studies textbooks used each year by the state's approximately 500,000 9th graders would require a **one-time outlay of \$75 million dollars**. Far more costly, however, are the annual teacher salaries for a dedicated cadre of ethnic studies teachers, one at every school site as [recommended](#) by the LAUSD Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction, who had helped to determine what

was necessary for implementing an ethnic studies requirement in the district and to draft the estimated budget. Based on a salary (plus benefits) of about \$100,000 per teacher per year, and assuming one dedicated ethnic studies teacher per high school at each of the state's 1,322 public and charter high schools, salaries alone would cost the state about **\$132 million per year, \$664 million over 5 years and \$1.32 billion over 10 years**, if AB 101 becomes law.

Although advocates for AB 101 and its precursor, AB 331, have claimed that courses in ethnic studies have positive academic benefits for students, a comprehensive analysis of the research cited in support of these claims by more than [100 university scholars and academics](#) with decades of experience designing and carrying out empirical research, found the claims to be wholly unsubstantiated.

Moreover, if AB 101 becomes law, the curricula most likely to form the basis for the required course — whether it is the recently approved AB 2016-mandated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum or one of the alternative curricula being vigorously promoted by educator-activists throughout the state — are firmly rooted in the highly politicized and controversial version of the discipline known as Critical Ethnic Studies, that many Californians believe is extremely divisive, will promote hatred and bigotry in CA classrooms, and is wholly inappropriate for K-12 students.

In light of the pandemic's drastic reversal of students' academic achievement, it is irresponsible and unethical to pass a bill requiring all students to take a course that is likely to cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars per year, has not been shown to improve students' academic achievement, and may in fact add to their trauma.

We urge you to vote no on AB 101.

Sincerely,

AMCHA Initiative
Better Milpitas
California Association of Scholars
Californians For Equal Rights Foundation
San Diego Asian Americans for Equality
Silicon Valley Chinese Association Foundation
TOC Foundation