

## Over 1,000 Members and Supporters of the Jewish Community Urge California Legislative Jewish Caucus to Oppose AB 101

May 20, 2021

Dear Members of the California Legislative Jewish Caucus,

We are members and supporters of the California Jewish community - 1,033 California residents, 68 Rabbis, and 269 out-of-state citizens - who are deeply concerned about the ethnic studies requirement bill, AB 101, and the enormously harmful impact we believe it will have on Jewish students and the Jewish community if it becomes law. We urge you to oppose this bill.

Although there is still considerable disagreement in the Jewish community about the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) recently approved by the State Board of Education, both in terms of its specific content and its Critical Ethnic Studies framework, that is not our primary concern now. Rather, we are profoundly alarmed that while AB 101 recommends school districts use the SBE-approved ESMC in developing courses that would fulfill the graduation requirement, it also allows the use of *any* curriculum "approved by the governing board of the school district," even the inflammatory and overtly antisemitic *first draft* of the ESMC. For reasons that will be explained below, we believe that if AB 101 becomes law, many if not most school districts in the state will choose to adopt the discredited first ESMC draft -- or an even more extreme version of it -- in implementing the law, thereby forcing all public and charter high school students to take a course that will incite tremendous ethnic and racial division, bigotry and harm, especially for Jewish students.

As you may know, while the CA Department of Education was revising the rejected first version of the curriculum, the original authors of that draft launched a massive campaign to promote their highly politicized curriculum -- including its antisemitic, anti-Zionist and BDS-promoting lessons -- throughout the state. Immediately after their draft was rejected, they started an organization called Save CA Ethnic Studies and launched a petition demanding that the State Board of Education adopt their draft. Then they lobbied individual school districts throughout the state to vote on a resolution in support of both their inflammatory curriculum and "the work of the Save CA Ethnic Studies Coalition in bringing together the experts to address any issues," and to

date, at least 20 districts have adopted it.

More recently, members of the original drafters established the [Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Institute](#) (LESMC) to further promote the main elements of the rejected first draft, as well as to [offer](#) school districts their educational expertise in implementing the “liberated” curriculum in their schools. While the group has yet to unveil their final curriculum, in various webinars promoting their efforts, LESMC's co-founders have made clear that their new curriculum would draw heavily from the antisemitic first ESMC draft, retaining its faithful adherence to the principles of Critical Ethnic Studies, a discipline that portrays Jewish Americans as racially privileged oppressors and Israel as a white supremacist apartheid state.

The LESMC's reliance on the first draft is supported by the fact that the group's website includes a webpage entitled “[Guiding Principles and Values](#)” that is an almost a verbatim restatement of the first draft's Guiding Principles and links to a 19-page [Glossary](#) that is nearly identical to the Glossary contained in the first draft, including the definition of “Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS)” as “a global social movement that currently aims to establish freedom for Palestinians living under apartheid conditions” and a definition of “liberation” that cites “BDS” as an example of a social movement “whose aim is to achieve freedom through equal rights and justice.”

If AB 101 becomes law, hundreds of districts will have to quickly decide which ethnic studies curriculum to adopt as the basis for the new requirement, and although the bill encourages adoption of the SBE-approved ESMC, we believe that many, if not most, districts will prefer the highly problematic “liberated” curriculum because of the overwhelming endorsement of the antisemitic first draft of the ESMC by teachers unions and the higher education community, as well as the successful efforts of those promoting the “liberated” curriculum to create pathways for teacher training and professional development using a Critical Ethnic Studies framework:

- The California Teachers Association, one of the largest and most powerful teachers' unions in the country representing over 300,000 teachers in the state and one of two organizational sponsors of AB 101, publicly [supported](#) the first draft of the ESMC, [refused](#) to support the final, SBE-approved draft, and [urged](#) teachers to visit the Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum website “for ideas about K-12 #EthnicStudies curriculum.” In addition, the CTA's affiliated United Teachers Los

Angeles, representing 35,000 teachers, also supported the first draft and recently hosted a webinar to promote the efforts of LESMC, [urging](#) its members to “get connected to the movement for a liberated curriculum.”

- The California State University Council on Ethnic Studies, representing Ethnic Studies departments on 22 CSU campuses, along with 23 University of California Ethnic Studies and Education departments and teacher training programs — departments and programs that will be responsible for educating and training the vast majority of K-12 ethnic studies teachers in the state — have all [endorsed](#) the rejected first draft.
- The former ESMC Advisory Committee members who spearheaded Save CA Ethnic Studies and LESMC to promote the rejected first draft are themselves professionally involved with training large numbers of ethnic studies teachers in the state:
  - LESMC Co-founder Theresa Montano, a professor of Chicano/a Studies at CSU Northridge with a focus on teacher training, is working to create a CSUN certificate program in ethnic studies for “working educators,” is involved with the “Ethnic Studies Pathway Project” to prepare CSUN students for ethnic studies careers in K-12 education, and announced in a recent [podcast](#) that she was organizing an upcoming CSUN event to bring “Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum folks...to do a session with our pre-service educators.”
  - LESMC Co-founder Guadalupe Cardona and R. Tolteka Cuahtin, former co-chair of the ESMC Advisory Committee who spearheaded the Save CA Ethnic Studies effort, are two of the three “[ethnic studies experts](#)” working for the [Instructional Leadership Corps](#) (ILC), an organization founded by SBE President Linda Darling-Hammond in conjunction with the CTA and Stanford University to support “educator-driven professional development” that has, since Fall 2014, served over 150,000 educators representing thousands of CA public schools in over 500 school districts. Cardona and Cuahtin’s success training educators to teach ethnic studies courses is featured in the ILC’s [April 2021 newsletter](#).

Despite claims that AB 101 contains safeguards to prevent ethnic studies courses from promoting “bias, bigotry and discrimination,” such language is simply a restatement of a statute

in the CA Education Code that has been on the books for decades. And as we have seen from highly politicized ethnic studies classes taught at the college level, these so-called guardrails will do nothing to prevent a curriculum based in Critical Ethnic Studies — whether approved by the SBE or promoted by the Liberated group — from portraying Jews and Israel in anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist ways, and inciting animus and harm towards Jewish students.

After the release of the appalling first draft of the ESMC, the California Legislative Jewish Caucus resolutely [took the lead](#) in exposing the “anti-Jewish bias” of the draft and raising the alarm about how it would “marginalize Jewish students and fuel hatred and discrimination against the Jewish community.” As a result of the caucus’ admirable leadership, the Jewish community and its allies came together with unprecedented unanimity to demand that the SBE reject or completely revise the curriculum, which they did.

Given that the Jewish community does not have the bandwidth to oppose the adoption of the antisemitic “liberated” curriculum in each of the hundreds of school districts where it is likely to be considered if AB 101 becomes law, we urge you to take the lead once again in opposing this dangerous bill. The safety and well-being of our children and our community depends on it.

Thank you for your leadership and ongoing advocacy on behalf of the California Jewish community,

*The undersigned members and supporters of the California Jewish community, which includes 68 Rabbis, 1,033 California residents\*, and 269 out-of-state concerned citizens:*

[Names removed in online version]