

July 7, 2021

Re: AB 101 (Medina) – Ethnic Studies Graduation Requirement – OPPOSE

Honorable Members of the Senate Standing Committee on Education,

We are 60 organizational supporters of the California Jewish community, 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 AB 101 recommends that school districts adopt the final State Board of Education-approved Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) as the basis for the required courses, the bill also allows for the use of any curriculum approved by an individual school district, even the inflammatory, overtly antisemitic first draft of the ESMC. That draft was opposed by 20,000 Californians, virtually every Jewish organization in the state, and the Legislative Jewish Caucus, whose members rightly [warned](#) that such a curriculum would “marginalize Jewish students and fuel hatred and discrimination against the Jewish community.” Governor Newsom, too, was appalled by the antisemitic first draft ESMC and [vowed](#) that it would “never see the light of day,” and SBE President Linda Darling-Hammond [announced](#), “The current draft model curriculum falls short and needs to be substantially redesigned.”

Alarming, however, there is compelling evidence to suggest that the antisemitic first draft of the ESMC -- or an even more extreme version of it -- will likely be adopted and implemented by many if not most school districts in the state if AB 101 becomes law.

While the CA Department of Education was revising the rejected first version of the ESMC, the original authors of that draft launched a massive campaign to promote their highly politicized curriculum -- including its anti-Jewish and anti-Zionist lessons -- throughout the state. Immediately after their draft was rejected they started an organization called Save CA Ethnic Studies and launched a petition in support of their draft, whose signatories included the California Teachers Association and United Teachers of Los Angeles, as well as the California State University Council on Ethnic Studies, representing Ethnic Studies departments on all CSU campuses, and 23 University of California Ethnic Studies and Education departments and teacher training programs -- departments and programs in both state university systems that are responsible for educating and training the vast majority of K-12 ethnic studies teachers in the state. Then, the group of first-drafters 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 the resolution.

More recently, members of the original drafters established the for-profit [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 highly politicized and divisive principles of Critical Ethnic Studies, a discipline that promotes antisemitic portrayals of Jewish Americans as racially privileged oppressors and Israel as a settler colonial, apartheid oppressor 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 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.”

The LESMC group has already had success in promoting their ‘Liberated’ curriculum and consulting services throughout the state. For example: Just last month, Hayward Unified School District (HUSD) Board of Trustees voted unanimously to approve a new \$40 million ethnic studies policy, and in the [press release](#), the district noted, “The policy and efforts to develop an Ethnic Studies framework are informed by and will include Critical Race Theory and the Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum”; Salinas Unified School District recently [approved](#) an LESMC member and former co-chair of the first-draft ESMC advisory committee to design its ethnic studies course and provide consulting services (at \$1,500 an hour); San Diego Unified School District is expected to approve a \$77 million spending [plan](#) to emphasize ethnic studies in all K-12 subjects that will be overseen by an Ethnic Studies Team chaired by a member of the LESMC and former Department of Education-hired writer of the first draft of the ESMC; and Jefferson Elementary School Board [approved](#) a \$40,000 contract with the consulting services of an LESMC member and co-chair of the first-draft ESMC advisory committee, to develop a curriculum for 8th grade ethnic studies classes.

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 support of the antisemitic first draft of the ESMC from major 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.

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 from portraying Jews and Israel in antisemitic and anti-Zionist ways, and inciting animus, hostility and harm towards Jewish students. Especially now, as violent conflict in the Middle East is spilling over into vicious attacks on Jews all over the world, including in [California](#), we believe a bill requiring all students to take classes based on an antisemitic Critical Ethnic Studies curriculum directly threatens the safety and well-being of Jewish students and the Jewish community.

For these reasons, **we urge you to vote NO on AB 101.**

Thank you for your leadership in these challenging times, and for ensuring that all California students are provided a non-politicized, non-bigoted quality education that helps them thrive in an ethnically diverse state, and sets them on the path to success.

Sincerely,

Academic Council for Israel
Alpha Epsilon Pi Fraternity (AEPi)
Amariah
AMCHA Initiative

American Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists
American Council of Trustees and Alumni
American Truth Project
Americans for Peace and Tolerance
B'nai B'rith International
Black Americans for Inclusive Ethnic Studies
Bulldogs for Israel (Brooklyn College)
California Association of Scholars
Californians for Equal Rights
CAMERA on Campus
Campus Anti-Semitism Task Force of the North Shore
Christians and Jews United for Israel
Club Z
Coalition for Jewish Values
Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting and Analysis (CAMERA)
Creative Community for Peace
CUFI on Campus
Davis Faculty for Israel
Eagles Wings
Education Without Indoctrination
Educators for Quality and Equality
Endowment for Middle East Truth (EMET)
Facts and Logic About the Middle East (FLAME)
Fuel for Truth
Herut North America, U.S. Division
Hillel of Silicon Valley
Institute for Black Solidarity with Israel
Iranian American Jewish Federation
Iranian Jewish Women's Organization
Israel Peace Initiative (IPI)
Jewish American Affairs Committee of Indiana (JAACI)
Jewish War Veterans of the USA
Latinx for Quality Education
Magshimey Herut
Michigan Jewish Action Council
Middle East Forum
Middle East Political and Information Network (MEPIN)
National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel
National Jewish Advocacy Center
North Carolina Coalition for Israel
Parents Defending Education
Proclaiming Justice to the Nations
Rabbinical Alliance of America
Rhode Island Coalition for Israel
Russian Jewish Community Foundation
San Diego Asian Americans for Equality
Scholars for Peace in the Middle East
Students and Parents Against Campus Anti-Semitism
Students Supporting Israel National

The Israel Christian Nexus
The Israel Group
The Lawfare Project
World Jewish Congress North America
Young Jewish Conservatives
Zachor Legal Institute
Zionist Organization of America