



September 19, 2019

Dear Members of the California Instructional Quality Commission:

We are writing on behalf of the Arab American Studies Association. The Arab American Studies Association is a private, non-profit, nonpolitical organization of scholars and other people interested in the study of Arab American history, ethnicity, culture, literature, art and music, politics, religion, sociology and other aspects of Arab American experience. The objectives of the Association are to advance the study of Arabs in diaspora, including in North America.

We write to applaud the California Department of Education's recognition of Arab American Studies as a crucial dimension of an Ethnic Studies curriculum. We find the Arab American Studies Course Outline to be thorough, enriching, and complex. In drafting the Arab American Studies Course Outline, the CDE has aligned itself with decades of scholarly and pedagogical literature in the field of Ethnic Studies, literature that at once illuminates the heterogeneous histories, fractures, and patterns of Arab American life; and understands Arab American lives to be lived in complex relation to racism, Orientalism, Islamophobia, and anti-immigrant sentiment. The Course Outline challenges the prevailing conflation of Arabs with Muslims, Persians, and Sikhs; offers nuanced exposure to the histories of Arab immigration and labor; and recognizes how processes of racialization are linked to law, policy, and culture.

Furthermore, we echo and support the three demands made by the Save California Ethnic Studies coalition: namely that the defining focus of the Model Curriculum draft remain on the histories and social justice struggles of communities of color; that the Ethnic Studies disciplinary pedagogy and expertise remain at the core of the project; and that the community of Ethnic Studies practitioners who created and vetted this curriculum remain at the table as it is revised and implemented.

Yours sincerely,

Sally Howell  
President, Arab American Studies Association

Amira Jarmakani  
President-Elect, Arab American Studies Association

Keith P. Feldman  
Secretary, Arab American Studies Association