



January 20, 2021

Tony Thurmond
State Superintendent, CA Department of Education
1430 N Street
Sacramento, California 95814

Re: C.O.P.E. OPPOSITION to Current Revisions of CA ESMC

Dear Superintendent Thurmond,

On behalf of **Congregations Organized for Prophetic Engagement** I am writing in **opposition** to the **current version of the CA Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC)**, which does not live up to the values, principles and pedagogy of Ethnic Studies. Essential Ethnic Studies terminology, including the definition of race, has been eliminated, incorrectly defined, or moved to the footnotes. The decolonial, anti-racist, and liberatory focus of Ethnic Studies has been buried in an avalanche of vague and contradictory language. The erasure of anyone's history undermines the purpose of ethnic studies.

Congregations Organized for Prophetic Engagement, as a Black-led, faith based grassroots organization in the Inland Empire (Riverside and San Bernardino County) knows the harm of erasure all too well, and the impact of the distorted depiction of Black history that has fueled anti-Black racism in this country. Therefore, when we see the makings of a similar framework, we have a responsibility to speak out. As an organization that prioritizes the current and historic contributions as well as the diverse voices in our community, we recognize Ethnic Studies as a foundational to the education of our youth and affirms the beauty of their history. It is imperative that students receive an anti-racist Ethnic Studies education that does not attempt to erase or wash out the harm that has been done to Black, Indigenous and communities of color.

Therefore we stand in solidarity with Save Arab American Studies Coalition and uplift their concern that Arab American Studies has been moved from its rightful place in Asian American/Pacific Islander Studies to an "interethnic bridge-building appendix." We share the anger of our Arab siblings that their history and community has been relegated to an appendix. and taking the lead from Ethnic Studies educators:

- Expand the pool of experts in the field of Ethnic Studies to decide on revisions to the ESMC that align with the principles, values, and pedagogy of Ethnic Studies.
- Put Arab American Studies—including Palestine—back where it belongs, within the Asian American Studies section of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum.

- Ensure that Black Ethnic Studies is equally inclusive of our diverse cultural and ethnic/racial history and contributions.
- Approve an ESMC that is anti-racist, decolonial and liberatory—that centers the voices and experiences of communities of color and their struggles for liberation.

We call on the CA Department of Education to take immediate action to protect the integrity of Ethnic Studies. We want a curriculum that meets the needs of our youth and carries on the spirit of the original 1968 Third World Liberation Front and Black Student Union strikes that led to Ethnic Studies as a discipline. It is not too late to stand with us on the right side of history and support an ESMC that will educate, protect, and inspire all our children.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Samuel Casey". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Rev. Samuel Casey, Executive Director of Congregations Organized for Prophetic Engagement (C.O.P.E.)