



JEWISH COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL
of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin, Sonoma, Alameda and Contra Costa Counties

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**Major California Jewish Group Launches Campaign
For Inclusion in Ethnic Studies Curriculum**

JCRC Calls for 'Accurate Representation of State's Diverse Population'

SAN FRANCISCO, Sept. 17 – A prominent California Jewish group has launched an urgent campaign to support the implementation of an inclusive and rigorous Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum for K-12 schools across the state.

The initial draft of the educational plan both excluded Jews and included anti-Jewish, anti-Israel components. A second version suggested by the state Department of Education in early August removed the denigrating content but did nothing to remedy exclusion.

“From the start of this process, our position has been that ethnic studies education is a powerful classroom tool to advance justice for marginalized communities,” said Tyler Gregory, executive director of the JCRC of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin, Sonoma, Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. “We believe that the interests of our Jewish community and those of the ethnic studies groups are aligned, and we look forward to working in coalition with them to advance our shared values in the classroom.”

The JCRC, the central public affairs arm in the region for the organized Jewish community, has held that if the curriculum includes narratives beyond the four foundational ethnic studies groups – African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans and Latinx Americans – Jewish narratives should also appear. The version made public on Aug. 12 honors the four traditional groups of ethnic studies yet adds groups other than Jews to the Asian American category.

“Our goal is not to have anyone excluded, but for an accurate representation of California’s diverse Jewish population, which includes Jews of Color and those from the Middle East, North Africa and Asia,” said Roselyne Swig, philanthropist and JCRC board member.

Jews of Color represent upward of 15 percent of the state’s Jewish population of more than 1 million. Tens of thousands of Persian (Iranian) Jews also call the state home.

Moreover, California has recently seen a spike in antisemitism, as Jews across the nation and around the world are increasingly targeted. On the last day of Passover in 2019, a gunman attacked the Chabad of

Poway, just north of San Diego, killing one and wounding three, including the congregation's rabbi. About 100 people were in attendance.

"As our nation experiences a surge in racial and ethnic violence, an ethnic studies curriculum with a robust and accurate core will benefit California as a whole," Gregory also said.

The proposed curriculum has a public commentary period ending Sept. 30, 2020; it is then set for a redrafting by March 2021. The finalization of the curriculum also comes as California Gov. Gavin Newsom has until Sept. 30 to decide on related legislation (AB331) that would officially mandate the teaching of the ethnic studies curriculum in the state's public schools.

In addition, in a Sept. 11 letter to the governor, leaders of the Jewish Public Affairs Committee (JPAC), the largest single-state coalition of Jewish organizations nationwide, called on Newsom to share critical points about the curriculum with Superintendent of Schools Tony Thurmond and urged Jewish inclusion. JCRC is a member of JPAC.

The JCRC advocacy campaign specifically calls for:

- the inclusion of a meaningful definition of antisemitism;
- no return of the derogatory language about Jews, Israelis and Israel, with guardrails in place to keep such language out of the classroom in the future;
- and the addition of a sample lesson reflecting the diversity of Jewish Americans.

The campaign, #JewsNotIncluded, encourages community members users to message state leaders with their concerns. It has garnered more than 4,000 comments to date and can be found online at: <https://jcrc.org/what-we-do/public-affairs/jews-not-included/>.

About the JCRC

The Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin, Sonoma, Alameda and Contra Costa Counties is the central public affairs arm of the organized Jewish community and represents more than 60 synagogues and Jewish organizations on critical issues affecting the Bay Area Jewish community.

In recent advocacy efforts, JCRC backed three statewide ballot initiatives – Propositions 15, 16 and 17 – that reflect its Jewish values, especially at a time of structural racism and economic inequality in the United States.

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