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Assembly California Legislature



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JOSE MEDINA
ASSEMBLYMEMBER, SIXTY-FIRST DISTRICT

June 19, 2020

Laurie Fong, President
and Santa Rosa City Schools Board of Education
211 Ridgway Ave
Santa Rosa, California 95401

Re: Support for Ethnic Studies Graduation Requirement

Dear President Fong and members of the Board:

As a former teacher of Ethnic Studies and the author of AB 331, a bill to add the completion of a course in Ethnic Studies, based on model curriculum, to high school graduation requirements, starting in the 2024-2025 school year.

I write in support of Trustee Medina's proposal to amend BP 6146.1.

Ethnic Studies concentrates on the experiences of various ethnic minorities and the ways in which their experiences were impacted by the issues of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and the interaction among different ethnic groups.

California has one of the largest and most diverse student populations in the nation. Ethnic minorities account for over 71 percent of the student population, with more than 90 languages spoken in District schools. This is reflected in Santa Rosa City Schools.

Given California's annual increase in diversity, it is important that students build knowledge of the various racial and ethnic groups in our state. Incorporating Ethnic studies courses into standard high school curriculum is a means to accomplish this. Ethnic Studies, promotes respect and understanding among races, supports student success and teaches critical thinking skills. Additionally, the courses provide students with the opportunity to learn about their respective culture in the context of California's history.

Requiring Ethnic Studies to be taught in high schools is an integral part of cultivating a classroom environment that is accepting of diversity. It is vital for young people to learn about their history, it is also important for them to feel like they can contribute to their communities in positive ways. An Ethnic Studies graduation requirement will help close the achievement gap by reducing student truancy and student enrollment, reduce drop-out rates, and better prepare our youth to be college prepared and career ready.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' followed by a horizontal line.

Jose Medina,
Assemblymember , 61st District