



September 9, 2021

VIA Email to the Office of the Governor and Author

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 101 (Medina) – Pupil instruction: high school graduation requirements: ethnic studies – REQUEST FOR GOVERNOR'S SIGNATURE

Dear Governor Newsom:

The League of Women Voters of California writes to request your signature on AB 101 (Medina), which would require that local educational agencies and charter schools for grades 9-12 offer at least a one-semester course in ethnic studies starting with the 2025 school year, and that completion of a one semester course in ethnic studies be required for graduation starting with the high school class of 2029-30. We applaud the fact that the state adopted ethnic studies model curriculum is only one means of meeting the graduation requirement and that school districts will have flexibility in developing a curriculum suited to their needs as defined in the bill.

California, a majority-minority state, enjoys enormous diversity. Ethnic minorities account for over 71 percent of the student population, with more than 90 languages spoken in District schools. Despite this, contributions of Black, Latinx, Native Americans, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, Indigenous peoples, Arab Americans, Jewish Americans, and others have been reduced to footnotes and entire movements have been superficially condensed.

We must move past the Eurocentric lens that is the dominant frame for interpreting United States history and life, a perspective that fails to validate the existence of the majority of California students. While ideally the issues that form the basis of ethnic studies should be baked into the curriculum across disciplines and grade-levels, and textbooks that tell an accurate history should replace those that gloss over or distort it, adding an ethnic studies course requirement for graduation is a step in the right direction.

California's approach to Ethnic Studies promotes respect and understanding among races, supports student success, and teaches critical thinking skills. The course

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provides students with an opportunity to learn about their respective cultures in the context of California's history and empowers them to contribute positively to their community. Requiring ethnic studies to be taught in high schools is an integral part of cultivating a classroom environment, and more broadly a state, that understands, respects and celebrates diversity.

For these reasons, the League of Women Voters of California strongly supports AB 101 and requests your signature. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Carol Moon Goldberg
President