



CONGRESSMAN BRAD SHERMAN

SERVING THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY

November 29, 2017

Dr. Michelle King
Los Angeles Unified School District
333 South Beaudry Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90017

Re: Anti-Semitic/Anti-Zionist "Continuing Education" Course

Dear Superintendent King,

I write to express concern about LAUSD's continuing education program. It has been brought to my attention that educators who attended a two-day course titled "Learning About Islam and the Arab World" received salary points, a metric used to allocate raises. I have reviewed much of the curriculum that has been made public and found examples of distortion, omission of relevant facts, inflammatory language, and bias.

The handout states that "from the late 1930s, the Zionist movement began preparing to take over as much of Palestine as possible, and to ethnically cleanse Palestine." It also claims that "most Palestinians were expelled in accordance with a Zionist plan to rid the county of its non-Jewish inhabitants" and "the basis for ethnic cleaning policy and actions was tied to the core principals of Zionist ideology." The materials describe Israel as "a supremacist ethnic state [which] poses as a democracy" and accuses Israel of "ethnic cleansing and incremental genocidal policies."

This material is not just false, but is anti-Semitic and should have raised immediate red flags with LAUSD.

It is quite alarming that taxpayer money was used to compensate LAUSD teachers who through no fault of their own, enrolled in courses that arm them with inaccurate information in their classrooms, and perpetuate ancient biases.

Additionally, I am concerned that LAUSD would promote an education program on the Middle East established by the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FORUSA), an organization who openly supports Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS), a highly polarizing movement that singles out Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East, and has led to anti-Semitic hostility. The BDS movement is adverse to the foreign policy of the United States.

It is my understanding that "Learning About Islam and the Arab World" has concluded and FORUSA must apply for a five-year renewal. LAUSD now must not only reject renewal for the workshop and sever ties with the organizer, but reform the process for approval of continuing education course material.

The Joint Salary Point Credit Committee must have a more rigorous approval process where course materials, curriculum, and instructors are reviewed, rather than simply the course objectives.

In addition, I urge you to encourage faculty who have taken the "Learning About Islam and the Arab World" course to enroll in an alternative course that leaves them with a more balanced perspective on Israel and the Middle East. Teachers should of course learn about Islam and other world religions, as well as the Arab-Israeli conflict; however, there is no place for anti-Semitism in our schools, and the teachers who attended this course deserve professional development courses that share facts, not falsehoods.

Some examples of materials that could be used for supplemental courses include the Anti-Defamation League's list of online resources and timeline of key dates in Israel's history. The Institute for Curriculum Services offers free professional development courses and materials on the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Peace Process, as well as Understanding Judaism. These workshops appear to support teachers in developing content knowledge, while integrating best practices and literacy strategies. I also encourage you to consider the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles's Holy Land Democracy Project which takes educators to the region for a first-person experience, and upon their return provides them with a curriculum for their students.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this matter. I stand ready to provide any assistance I can in ensuring that LAUSD educators have access to high-quality professional development opportunities which result in an enriched curriculum for our children. It is critical that these opportunities arm our teachers with objective facts, instead of untrue information about Israel which perpetuates anti-Semitism.

Sincerely,



Brad Sherman
Member of Congress

CC: Nick Melvoin, LAUSD Board Member, District 4
Acting Superintendent Vivian Ekchian