



Armenian National Committee of America – Western Region

December 8, 2015

Instructional Quality Commission
1430 N Street, Suite #5111
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Treatment of Armenian Genocide in History-Social Science Framework

Dear Commissioners:

The purpose of our letter is to express our strong support for the recommendations made to the Commission by the Genocide Education Project (“GenEd”) for the incorporation of language pertaining to the Armenian Genocide within the History-Social Science Framework in its letter to the Commission dated November 30, 2015 (attached). There are three specific recommendations outline in GenEd’s letter: the first two pertain to the Grade Ten: World History section, and the third one pertains to the Grade Eleven: U.S. History section. We urge the Commission to incorporate all three recommendations into the draft which will be released to the public later this month.

In the weeks and months leading up to the October 2015 meetings, numerous requests and proposals had been made by educators and members of the public regarding the treatment of the Armenian Genocide in the previous drafts. In addition, under the leadership of Assembly Member Nazarian, several members of our State Legislature expressed support for corrections and enhancements to be made in a letter to the Commission, and in fact Assembly Member Nazarian attended the HSS-SMC meeting on October 9, 2015 and offered testimony. In order to avoid confusion regarding the proposals, GenEd has summed up its requests in its November 30 letter, the first of which is a repetition of our earlier requests, along with two additional requests.

GenEd is a California non-profit educational organization which has specialized for many years in developing and disseminating curriculum and lesson plans regarding genocide, including the LAUSD, among other school districts, as well as providing teacher training workshops within districts in our state and throughout the nation. They have extensive resources, including the expertise of some of the most preeminent scholars of the Armenian Genocide, and educators experienced in writing history and social science curriculum material. Accordingly, GenEd has our unqualified confidence as the best resource to advise educators regarding the teaching of the Armenian Genocide.

The first recommendation by GenEd concerns changes and additions to Lines 619-633 of Page 456 which were designed to correct some inaccuracies or ambiguities within the draft released in September 2015. We had earlier submitted our recommendations of that particular language in a letter dated October 6, 2015 (attached); in addition, GenEd had submitted a similar letter on October 7, 2015 (attached). Both organizations also appeared at the October 9-10, 2015 HSS-SMC meeting and the November 19-20, 2015 Commission meeting and offered comments consistent with that recommendation.

The meeting materials indicated that “the Co-Chairs will make additional edits to the section on the Armenian Genocide at a later date,” and Co-Chair Honig, Co-Chair McTygue and Executive Director Adams, indicated that the recommended language would be incorporated before the draft framework is released for public comment later this month. We thank you for your responsiveness, and we look forward to the revised draft.

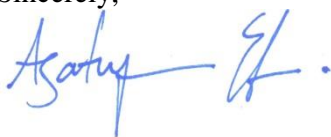
Upon further review of the draft framework, along with GenEd, we recognized that two additions could provide our students with better context concerning the American and international responses to the first major modern genocide, parallels to the Holocaust, and the inspiration for the development of the Genocide Convention.

Accordingly, in its November 30, 2015 letter, GenEd made an additional recommendations for language to be added at Line 937 of Page 470 of the Grade Ten section which would provide students an opportunity to be exposed to comparative genocide by instructing them about the role which the Armenian Genocide played as a precursor to the Holocaust within the context of Twentieth Century history.

GenEd’s third and final recommendation is for the addition of language at Line 347 at Page 520 to the Grade Eleven section, which would provide students with an opportunity to learn about a shining example of our nation’s generosity in the face of genocide, that was very well known at the time and in subsequent decades, but which has since eroded from our collective memory. Student’s should learn about the United States’ and California’s responses—which was part of a collective effort that raised an unprecedented amount of humanitarian aid and helped save more than 132,000 orphans and approximately one million Christians who were imperiled due to the Ottoman Turk’s genocidal actions—through the Near East Relief organization and the American Red Cross.

We appreciate the Commission’s interest in working further on this section, and we welcome the opportunity to work with the Commission, Department of Education and your consultants in order to enhance the existing language regarding in such a way as to provide additional context regarding this important and relevant topic to our students. There is a significant amount of scholarship which supports GenEd’s proposals which can be readily provided to you and accordingly, we urge you to adopt the language included in GenEd’s November 30 letter, in lieu of and in addition to the language in the current draft. Please let us know if we can be of assistance in any way, and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Asatryan E.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Elen Asatryan, Executive Director