



Armenian National Committee of America – Western Region

July 8, 2016

The California State Board of Education
1430 N Street, Suite #5111
Sacramento, CA 95814

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

Dear President Kirst and Members of the Board:

We would like to express our gratitude to the Instructional Quality Commission for its thoughtful deliberation regarding the treatment of many topics that our students are taught within the history-social science curriculum. While many improvements were made by the IQC, unfortunately a significant chapter of American history—the United States’ extraordinary humanitarian response to the Armenian Genocide—was left out of the draft Eleventh Grade United States history portion, despite an initial decision by members of the commission that they supported the inclusion of a brief paragraph to incorporate such a reference during the meeting of the HSS Subject Matter Committee meeting on March 24, 2016. We urge the Board to reconsider the issue, and amend the proposed History-Social Science Framework to include such language.

Learning about the unprecedented U.S. humanitarian response to the Genocide—largely through the efforts of the first U.S. Congressionally sanctioned humanitarian organization, the Near East Relief—would inform students that U.S. History does not happen in isolation from events around the globe. It would also provide them with an opportunity to learn about a shining example of our nation’s generosity in the face of genocide, something that was very well known at the time and in subsequent decades, but which has since eroded from our collective memory.

Our organization and the Genocide Education Project had earlier submitted proposed language regarding the topic to the IQC and its HSS Subject Matter Committee in our letters, respectively dated February 17, 2016 and November 30, 2015 (attached). Assembly Member Adrin Nazarian had also submitted similar language, and during the March 24, 2016 meeting, the HSS SMC opted to support the inclusion of Mr. Nazarian’s proposal, seemingly for the sake of brevity. The following was Mr. Nazarian’s proposal regarding references to the Near East Relief Organization:

“Teachers can introduce the history of the Near East Relief organization established by the former U.S. ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau. Near East Relief came to the aid of hundreds of thousands of Armenian Genocide survivors through the establishment of orphanages, food and vocational programs, etc. Teachers can also use the example of the first international aid project of the Red Cross in helping Armenian Genocide survivors, and the phrase, “Remember the starving Armenians!” as a means to demonstrate to students the profound effect the Armenian Genocide had on the American public.”

Based upon the framework which is currently in force, it is evident that the Board recognizes the value of having our students taught about the Genocide. This year, the IQC proposed strengthening the references to

the Genocide within the framework, and an additional way that this would be done is to suggest to teachers that not only was this a significant chapter of modern world history, but that it was a noteworthy episode of United States history as well. Once again, we urge the Board to reconsider, and reincorporate the language mentioned above which may have inadvertently been left out. Please let us know if you have any questions. Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Asatryan E.". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Elen Asatryan, Executive Director