

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE BILL ANALYSIS

AMENDMENT DATE: 07/15/2021
POSITION: Oppose

BILL NUMBER: AB 101
AUTHOR: Medina, Jose

BILL SUMMARY: Pupil instruction: high school graduation requirements: ethnic studies.

This bill adds the completion of a one-semester course in ethnic studies to California's high school graduation requirements, beginning for students graduating in the 2029-30 school year, and requires all public high schools to offer at least one semester-long course in ethnic studies beginning in the 2025-26 school year. This bill also clarifies that the ethnic studies course requirement applies to charter schools, and explicitly states that all existing high school graduation requirements apply to charter schools. Finally, this bill authorizes the ethnic studies course requirement to be met through the completion of an ethnic studies course based on the ethnic studies model curriculum adopted by the State Board of Education, an existing ethnic studies course, a locally-developed ethnic course approved by the governing board of the local educational agency, or an ethnic studies course taught as part of a course that has been approved as meeting the A-G requirements of the University of California and the California State University.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Finance estimates that this bill could create state costs in the low hundreds of millions Proposition 98 General Fund, if the requirements of the bill are determined to be a state-reimbursable mandate. This cost estimate assumes that school districts will need to hire over 1,700 additional teachers and purchase new instructional materials to ensure that all high school students have access to a semester of ethnic studies prior to graduation. These assumptions are based on an estimated 554,099 high school students enrolled in a single subject course and are consistent with the Commission on State Mandates ruling on Graduation Requirements. While the bill adds the course requirement for students graduating in 2029-30, costs to school districts to hire additional teachers and purchase materials would likely begin in 2024-25, per the added requirement that school districts offer at least a one-semester course in ethnic studies by 2025-26. If the Commission on State Mandates were to determine these requirements to be a state-reimbursable mandate, the cost would likely be added to the K-12 Mandate Block Grant program.

COMMENTS

Although requiring high school students to complete a one-semester course in ethnic studies would further students' understanding of California's diverse population and communities, the Department of Finance is opposed to this bill for the following reasons:

- This bill could create Proposition 98 General Fund costs in the low hundreds of millions, if the requirements of the bill are determined to be a state-reimbursable mandate.
- While the 2021 Budget Act included several significant initiatives to mitigate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and help schools better support vulnerable students, the pandemic has negatively impacted the ability of many students to meet existing minimum graduation

Analyst/Principal Alexander, Amber	Date	Program Budget Manager Ferguson, Chris	Date
Department Deputy Director			Date
Governor's Office:	By:	Date:	Position Approved _____ Position Disapproved _____

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COMMENTS (continued)

requirements. Further, increasing high school graduation requirements will create significant workload at the local level, at a time when schools are undergoing a variety of programmatic changes to assist students as they return to full-time in-person instruction.

Current law establishes high school graduation requirements, and authorizes school districts to adopt further coursework as a requirement for high school graduation. In recent years, several school districts in California have opted to make completion of a course in ethnic studies a local graduation requirement. In recognition of that, the State Board of Education adopted a course description for ethnic studies for grade nine in its July 2016 revision of California's History-Social Science Framework. Further, pursuant to existing law, the Board adopted a model curriculum in ethnic studies in March of this year.

The 13 state-required courses for a student to graduate from high school are: (1) three years of English; (2) two years of mathematics; (3) three years of history/social science; (4) two years of science; (5) one year of visual performing arts, world language, or career technical education; and (6) two years of physical education. In 2019-20, 84 percent of students graduated with a traditional high school diploma in a 4-year time frame. However, graduation rates vary widely across the state, with four counties reporting rates below 75 percent and only twelve counties reporting greater than 90 percent graduation rate in 2019-20.

Code/Department Agency or Revenue Type	SO	(Fiscal Impact by Fiscal Year)							
	LA	(Dollars in Thousands)							
	CO	PROP					Fund		
	RV	98	FC	2023-2024	FC	2024-2025	FC	2025-2026	Code
6398/St Mand-K-12	LA	Yes	C	0	C	100,000-300,000	C	100,000-300,000	0001