

The following comment read by Jessica Meller on 9/20/23 was delivered on behalf of and with the approval of JCVT (Jewish Communities of Vermont):

Thank you all for your work on Ethnic Studies, important work which JCVT fully supports.

JCVT has submitted a letter concerning the Working Groups' draft Frameworks. Our comments in that letter reflect our interest in making sure that the Frameworks before you this morning meet the needs of all students and comply with the ACT 1 legislation.

Specifically, JCVT has consistently advocated that the definition of Ethnic Groups in the Standards, and now in the Frameworks, to be exactly as it appears in the ACT 1 law.

In ACT 1, Ethnic Groups intentionally includes part B, "groups that have been historically subject to persecution or genocide".

Vermont legislators included part (B) because it wants Vermont K=12 students to also learn about the cultures, contributions and struggles of groups, including Jews, who have been historically subjected to persecution and genocide. This aligns with the White House's recent, first in US history, National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism.

However, in both the Standards and the Frameworks, these groups are not included in their definition of Ethnic Groups. Instead, genocide and persecution - not people - are suggested topics for Ethnic Studies to cover. With this change, the definition of defined groups has been dramatically altered.

We believe genocides and persecutions should not be studied as stand-alone incidents in world history, but rather, explorations should include the history, culture, contributions, and resilience of the historically victimized groups.

We are eager for the SBE to take a look at JCVT's full comments and are available to meet or respond to any questions.

Jessica Meller for JCVT