**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  **May 30, 2018**

**Statement from the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies Tejas Foco Committee on Mexican American Studies Pre-K-12 to the Texas State Board of Education in response to the recent historic vote to approve TEKS standards for a Mexican American Studies course, but renaming the course Ethnic Studies: An Overview of Americans of Mexican Descent**

On Friday, April 13, 2018, the Texas State Board of Education (TXSBOE) approved Texas Essential Skills and Knowledge (TEKS) standards for a Mexican American Studies (MAS) elective course for high school students. This is the first time in Texas and US history that a state board of education approves a MAS course, and the first time in Texas history that they approve an Ethnic Studies course of any kind. The TXSBOE also voted to open the process to create other Ethnic Studies courses, including Native American Studies, African American Studies, Latino Studies, and Asian/Pacific Islander Studies. We commend the TXSBOE for these actions.

The TXSBOE vote to approve this MAS course should have been an historic accomplishment for the TXSBOE, the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS) Tejas Foco Committee on MAS Pre-K-12, and the many organizations and individuals who have been advocating for such a course before the board for the last five years. However, this historic vote was marred by the TXBOE’s amendment and vote to change the name of the course from Mexican American Studies to Ethnic Studies: An Overview of Americans of Mexican Descent. This action was offensive and is unacceptable to the NACCS Tejas Foco Committee on MAS Pre-K-12, and we demand that the TXSBOE vote to change the name of the course back to its original title, Mexican American Studies, for the following reasons:

1. The course approved by the TXSBOE modeled itself after the Innovative course that the Houston Independent School District adopted with the consent of the Texas Education Agency. Its title, Mexican American Studies, reflects the Mexican American Studies declared course content and purpose;
2. Mexican American Studies is an established Field of Study in Texas as authorized by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the higher education counterpart to the TXSBOE. One of the main purposes of this designation is to align the curriculum across the educational pipeline and to grant the courses the necessary transferability from the high schools to the community colleges and universities. Naming the course Mexican American Studies conforms with the name of the field of study and policy of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the logic of alignment and transferability;
3. The stated reasons for changing the Mexican American Studies title are ahistorical and misleading. The term Mexican American is not divisive or biased, nor does it suggest a hyphenated (or unassimilable) condition. Mexican American has been the most popular English-language self-referent since the early 1900s and the typical way to refer to Mexican-origin persons in the US. It affirms an American identity and national allegiance at the same time that it claims a Mexican ancestry. The term is no different from others, such as African Americans, Italian Americans, and Native Americans. Lastly, the use of the term Mexican expands the cultural meaning of American. The remark by board member Bradley that to adopt Mexican American Studies is to accept the idea that “hyphenated Americans” do not embrace an American identity, is preposterous, misleading and divisive;
4. Mexican Americans, as Indigenous people to this continent of America and an ethnic/racial minority in the US, have the right to self-identification. This right to name oneself at the individual and collective level is protected by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, specifically the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. Mexican Americans have the right to name their field of study and courses within this field of study. They also have the right to tell their own stories, and those that have been written in their name, including the vast body of scholarly literature that uses the term Mexican American to describe their work and the courses that high school, college and university instructors are currently teaching;
5. The large numbers of Mexican Americans in Texas public schools calls for the designation of Mexican American Studies. Mexican Americans and other Latinx students comprise 52% of the almost 5.4 million students in Texas schools Pre-K-12, and this will grow to almost 70% by 2050;
6. The title Mexican American Studies conforms with Mexican American Studies courses that Texas school districts have already adopted (some of which have been approved or allowed by the TXSBOE), as well as Social Studies, Texas and U.S. history courses that emphasize Mexican American history and contemporary experiences. In addtion, the TXSBOE and Texas Education Agency have approved course content in Mexican American Studies since, at least, the 1980s, and called for textbooks in Mexican American Studies with Proclamations 2016 and 2018. There was never any discussion or controversy over a name change with these board actions;
7. In singling out the name change for this Mexican American Studies course, the TXSBOE has created a glaring inconsistency with the other endorsed courses included in the vote: Native American Studies, African American Studies, Latino Studies and Asian/Pacific Islander Studies; and
8. The word "Overview" in the name change calls for a cursory treatment and not an in-depth examination of the subject, in contradiction with the broad purpose and content of this course. In addition, Mexican Americans/Chicanxs do not identify with the term “Americans of Mexican Descent.” It is a throwback to the 1950s Jim Crow era of segregation when Texas school officials disparaged the racial and ethnic makeup of Black and Brown youth.

In light of the renaming action by the TXSBOE, and all the logical reasons stated above, our questions for the nine Anglo Republicans and one Latina Democrat who voted for this name change are: What are the real reasons that you voted for this name change? Is it true, as board member Bradley stated to the press, that the TXSBOE would have never voted for the approval of this MAS course if the name had not been changed? And if so, why not? Who gave the very partisan TXSBOE the right to change the name of an entire and significant ethnic group of people in Texas and the US? And what gives them the right to change the name of a course within an established field of study in Texas? Why was Mexican American Studies singled out? Does this constitute outright discrimination, or conscious/unconscious political bias?

Mexican Americans, and the diverse students of all colors and ethnicities in Texas public schools, have the right to learn and understand the many positive contributions Mexican Americans and other ethnic groups have made to Texas and American history.

The National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies Tejas Foco Committee on Mexican American Studies Pre-K-12 has been working tirelessly over the last five years to advance Mexican American and other Ethnic Studies in Texas schools with significantly positive and historic results. The recent decision by the TXSBOE to misname this Mexican American Studies course represents another obstacle to our work, and a hindrance to learning in our schools. We are committed to opposing this name change until the TXSBOE adopts the original title of this course: Mexican American Studies. It’s an easy fix, at the next TXSBOE meeting, June 12-15, 2018, vote MAS. And let’s move on to addressing the more pressing educational problems, and giving our teachers and students all of the resources they need to help them succeed in Texas public schools.

This NACCS Tejas Statement will be presented to the elected members of the Texas State Board of Education at their next meeting on Tuesday, June 12, 2018 at the William B. Travis Bldg. (1701 Congress Ave., Austin, TX 78701). A "Protest the Name Change Press Conference & Rally" will precede the board meeting from 8:30-9:30am in front of the William B. Travis Bldg. The public is invited to attend the Rally and to testify before the board.