



AB2763 (Essayli): MENA Inclusion Act



CAIR-CA Position: CO-SPONSOR

Summary

AB 2763—The Middle Eastern or North African Inclusion (MENA) Act—will require all California entities that collect demographic or ancestry data to include a “Middle Eastern or North African” category.

Background & Problem

According to 2020 estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 740,219 individuals in California identify as Middle Eastern or North African. Currently, the state of California refers to the recommended standards provided by the Office of Management and Budget in the Federal Government. These standards place populations who identify as MENA within the “White” category, which is defined as “individuals from Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.”

Individuals with roots in the MENA region have numerous and varied ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds, which renders “White” aggregated demographic data collection in California entirely inadequate in capturing the unique experiences that each group faces, from health issues to socioeconomic outcomes. This prevents state agencies and the Legislature from making informed decisions about how and where to deploy resources for MENA populations. For instance, emerging research into disparate health outcomes for MENA groups—see works published in *SSM – Population Health* (2020), *BMC Public Health* (2021), and *PLoS One* (2022)—demonstrates clear use cases for disaggregated MENA data in healthcare.

Establishing a MENA category will allow for thorough investigation and informed analysis of trends beyond health, extending to education, employment, housing, and civil rights. It will also provide long overdue representation and recognition of California’s extensive and vibrant MENA communities.

Solution

AB 2763 will require a MENA category to be included in all future collections of demographic data concerning ethnic, racial, or ancestral background by California state departments, commissions, and agencies, encompassing the following identities:

- Middle Eastern: Afghan, Bahraini, Emirati, Iranian, Iraqi, Israeli, Jordanian, Kuwaiti, Lebanese, Omani, Palestinian, Qatari, Saudi Arabian, Syrian, Turkish, and Yemeni.
- North African: Algerian, Djiboutian, Egyptian, Libyan, Mauritanian, Moroccan, Sudanese, and Tunisian.
- Transnational Middle Eastern and North African: Amazigh or Berber, Armenian, Assyrian, Chaldean, Circassian, Kurdish

Additionally, the bill will require the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to include these categories for the purposes of voluntary self-identification by individuals admitted, in custody, released, and paroled.

Support

- Arab American Civic Council (Sponsor)
- CAIR-CA (Co-sponsor)
- Somali Family Service of San Diego
- American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
- ACCESS California Services
- Armenian-American Action Network
- National Iranian American Council (NIAC)
- National Network for Arab American Communities (NNAAC)

Opposition

None.