

Testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 304 Education - Public Schools - Asian American History Curriculum Requirement

FAVORABLE

My name is Ella Jiao, I am a 10th grader at River Hill High School in Howard County, and I am here to testify in support of SB 304. Anti-Asian hate still persists to this day, and it ultimately stems from ignorance. These acts are not just happening now; hundreds of years of exclusion, erasure, and invisibility have led to the changes that need to be implemented. SB 304 is an essential bill that will allow for the education of the students in Maryland on Asian American history. There are more than 22 million Asian Americans in America, making up about 6% of the US population, yet our stories are not shared, voices still not heard. Asian American history is taught incompletely, if at all, throughout schools in our state. SB 304 will work to combat this issue as it requires the State Board of Education to develop a curriculum on Asian American history that is taught at least once in elementary, middle, and high schools. The existing curriculum only focuses on a few milestones, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, or the Japanese incarcerations during World War 2, but these stories, while important, do not paint an accurate picture of the Asian American experience. History is not only a list of events in a history textbook, but rather the collection of thousands of personal stories of struggles and successes. Personally, I just read the book *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan, which tells the story of generational struggles of Asian American women, which increased my understanding of Asian American experiences that differ from my personal ones. The incorporation of not only history curriculum, but literary works such as this one, will broaden the understanding of the Asian American experience, personalizing the events learned about in history textbooks with characters and plot lines relatable to students. Asian Americans have been in this country for a long time, because such stories are not told, Asian Americans are still seen as foreigners to this country, a perpetual “other,” and during national crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic, we are seen as the enemy. This is the reason so much anti-Asian hate still exists; without being represented as an integral part of this country, it is easy for misinformation and fear to spread. Diversifying the education system and incorporating the history of underrepresented groups, especially Asian Americans, will help to diminish the existing prejudices that fuel the hatred revealing itself in these anti-Asian acts. This bill will allow the students of Maryland to grasp a more complete understanding of the history of the state and the nation, which includes the contributions and struggles of Asian Americans. Therefore, I urge a favorable report on SB 304. Thank you for your time and consideration.