



Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice-Chair
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

OCA-APA Advocates
Greater Washington DC Chapter
P.O. Box 10433
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Wednesday February 16, 2022

Support of Senate Bill 462 - Public Schools - Expanded American History - Development of Content Standards and Implementation

Good afternoon

I am Dr. Christine Lee, co-President of OCA-DC and mother to a beautiful ten-year-old boy. My son is so fortunate to grow and learn in an environment that cares so much about his education but also provides him an opportunity to understand the richness of diversity.

I remember that as a little girl growing up, I was bullied because I was different, my food was different, and my culture was different. Also, I didn't have any role models to look up to. The only Asian women I saw in the public eye were also portrayed as submissive, foreign, and often sexualized.

Unfortunately, my personal experiences were not isolated events. There has been a stark rise in anti-Asian hate incidents by nearly 150% nationally since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The roots of anti-Asian hate are systemic and deeply embedded, yet the Asian Pacific Islander American (APA) experience has long been invisible in school curriculums. Nearly 13%, (12.6%) of incidents were reported from school age youth suggesting that anti-Asian racism may begin at earlier ages. Bullying of APA students can lead to significant impacts on psychological health, well-being, self-esteem, and development

It has been well documented that talking and teaching children about acceptance and looking beyond the differences in others can only help in the bigger conversation of prevention. When kids appreciate the benefit that stems from learning and living in a diverse community, there is less interest in labeling what might be different or calling it out to others. It's in that place that prevention occurs, and schools stay safe and bullying mitigated

Approximately 7% of Maryland's population self-identifies as Asian-American, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander, and the nation's overall population is the fastest growing minority and expected to increase from 22.6 million to over 46 million by 2060

The integration of greater diversity into the education system would reflect the diversity of students in Maryland. Within a broader diversity framework, this Senate Bill 462 - Public Schools - Expanded American History - Development of Content Standards and Implementation would offer an opportunity to create greater sensitivity to the APA experience, give children an opportunity to have positive role models that look like them, reduce stereotyping, school bullying, and ultimately hate incidents in the longer term .

There have been many positive contributions of APAs to the United States, highlighting their love and commitment to their country, including political leaders such as Vice President Kamala Harris, arts, sciences such as Dr. Chien-Shiung Wu, an early advocate for women in STEM, and the building of infrastructure such as the Transcontinental Railroad. Through both oral and written historical sources, the story of the APA community's vibrancy, civic engagement,



OCA GREATER WASHINGTON, DC – Asian Pacific American Advocates
EMBRACING THE HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS OF ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICANS

resiliency, and hopes for a brighter future emerge and provide opportunities to teach about helping to build the very fabric of America.

Without specific inclusion in the curriculum, these experiences and contributions have been largely unknown, which contributes to the othering of the APA community as perpetual foreigners, when in fact there is an over 400 year history of the Asian American community in the US as well as a long rich history of the Pacific Islander community

In closing, as leaders and advocates in OCA-APA Advocates, Greater Washington DC Chapter, we are in strong support of Maryland Senate Bill 462 - Public Schools - Expanded American History - Development of Content Standards and Implementation. An expanded American History content standards to include the history of contributions of multiple communities in the US, including the APA community, would be a positive benefit to reflect the diversity of communities living in Maryland and create greater sensitivity to diverse experiences from a young age, which may lead to longer term positive impacts such as reductions in stereotyping, bullying, and hate incidents. Therefore, we urge the committee to pass Maryland Senate Bill 462 - Public Schools - Expanded American History - Development of Content Standards and Implementation.

Since I was little girl I have always believed in creating a better future for the next generation and I'm honored to be able to share my testimony today.

OCA-APA Advocates
Greater Washington DC Chapter
P.O. Box 10433
Rockville, Maryland 20850