

## **Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee**

### **SB0462 - Public Schools - Expanded American History - Development of Content Standards and Implementation**

**Testimony from Janelle Wong** (Bethesda, MD)

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I submit this testimony as a state resident on behalf of the Montgomery County Progressive Asian American Network (MoCoPAAN), for which I serve as a board member. **This testimony is in SUPPORT of SB 462**

The proposed legislation would expand American History standards in our public schools to help students to better understand our nation's history and culture from diverse perspectives, including attention to the experiences and perspectives of a range of racial and ethnic groups.

Sustained exposure to high quality curriculum that adopts an inclusive perspective toward historically marginalized groups like that proposed in this bill is associated with positive learning outcomes in the K-12 public school context.

I did not have a chance to take courses with enhanced content on non-white groups myself until I attended college. And it was not until then that I learned my own history and that of so many other groups. I learned that during the Chinese Exclusion Era, Chinese Americans were the first to be deemed "illegal immigrants" in the U.S. I learned that a mass lynching of Chinese took place in Los Angeles in 1871 and that Mexican Americans in the Southwest were subject to mob violence from that same period into the 20th century. I learned that U.S. courts have defined who is "White" inconsistently and illogically over time. These courses also helped me to understand the origins and persistent effects of residential and educational segregation. Learning about the rich history of the United States is the mark of an excellent education. This bill invests in students to expand state standards to ensure our students receive an accurate and informed education.

This bill encourages students to think more deeply about their own identities and histories in relation with others, and to consider more seriously how we are all connected.

MoCoPAAN's values include:

That Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders should be seen and heard, as well as engaged and supported.

MoCoPAAN believes in equitable and inclusive policies that provide opportunities for people of all backgrounds.

MoCoPAAN believes that Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders must actively speak out and fight against racism and discrimination.

MoCoPAAN believes that acknowledging and confronting Anti-Blackness and Systemic Racism must be foregrounded in our collective work.

As such, SB 462 is consistent with our values and we strongly support its passage.