



February 23, 2022

Via Email – Original by Surface Mail

Honorable Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary
Chair, House Ways and Means Committee
House Office Building, Room 131
Annapolis, MD 21401

SUB: Testimony in SUPPORT OF HB922

Dear Chair Atterbeary and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee,

The **Indian Cultural Association (ICA)**, the largest cultural organization in the region, on behalf of the Indian community and on behalf of the more than 10,000 families ICA represents, does hereby offer its testimony in **SUPPORT of House Bill 922** Education - Public Schools - Asian American History Curriculum Requirement.

The Indian community is the largest immigrant community in Howard County and faces racism and hate on a regular basis, especially against its Hindu minority community. An estimated 80% - 84% of Indians are Hindu. They are the forgotten people, persecuted throughout the course of history, over a thousand years, having endured the largest genocide in human history at the hands of barbaric Islamic invaders. The scars of slavery weigh heavily on the Indian psyche. The inequities it created remain entrenched.

Hindus face racism and hate not only from some in the majority community in America because of the color of their skin, but also from within the AAPI community which seeks selective equity and promotes Hinduphobia and Hindumnesia (hate against Hindus for the reason of their religion and country of origin). Hate and racism emanate from within the AAPI, as evidenced by the exclusion of the Hindu community from participation and self-expression in Howard County, Maryland.

While Anti-Asian racism is reportedly on the rise, **hate, ethnic cleansing, and genocide against Hindus** worldwide is the historical norm, as evidenced by the ongoing genocide against Hindus in Bangladesh today and historical “cleansing” of Hindus from various parts of the world, including Kashmir, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and over a dozen other countries (these refugees live among us in Howard County). The world remains silent as these atrocities continue today.

Hindu holidays, their interpretation, and expression are filtered by extremists in Howard County and its school system. The current Howard County administration gives awards, citations, and makes political appointments, to these same extremists, and offers shelter to radical, fundamentalist jihadis who spew hate against Hindus, demonize Hindus, and equate Hindus with Nazis.

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There is a lack of understanding of the people of Indian descent, and an active distortion of India and Indian history by extremist invaders of the past and those, would-be, oppressors of Indians today, these seek to dominate and enslave Hindu-Indians once again. There are people who still don't know that India is a country (confusion with Red Indian / Native American, etc). Furthermore, there is an active effort by some to erase/cancel India, by referring to India as "South-Asia," purposefully omitting "India", the country of reference.

Education is the best way to fight misinformation and racism and historical distortions as we see in present-day Howard County.

India is nearly 1.4 billion people and is the largest Democracy in the world. India will become the most populated country in the world within this decade (projected in 2027), surpassing China's population. India's economy is the third (3rd) largest economy in the world (PPP), behind China and the United States. India's economy is projected to be ranked second (2nd) in the world by 2050. India is currently ranked as the 4th most powerful nation on earth. As the world shifts toward Asia, it is imperative that we Marylanders gain a firm, truthful, and unfiltered understanding of the people of Asia.

Indians are dispersed throughout the world and are the largest immigrant community in Howard County. Indians are the richest minority in the United States and form an integral part of our society. Indians contribute significantly to social welfare - see ICA food distributions (ICAHoward.org). ICA has distributed more food to struggling families during the pandemic than the Howard County Food Bank.

Indian culture adds richness to America. It is only fitting that we learn more about our neighbors, engage with them and build ties with one of the most peaceful cultures of the world.

Equity in education, social tranquility, and strength in its diversity, while ensuring America's competitiveness in the world will entail teaching Asian history, culture, and languages from early ages, beginning from elementary school.

We add our voice in support of HB922.

Sanjay Srivastava, President

Indian Cultural Association

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