

Committees: Ways and Means

Testimony on: HB960 Education - Public Schools - Asian American History Curriculum Requirement

Position: Favorable

27 February 2023

Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and the members of the Ways and Means Committee,

The University of Maryland – College Park, Student Government Association supports HB960 that would require the Maryland K-12 curriculum to include courses on Asian American history.

My name is Nelson Chen, and I currently take Asian American studies courses at the University of Maryland – College Park. From learning about the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 to various Supreme Court cases about Asian Americans facing discrimination, I feel my education has taken a crucial interdisciplinary approach that began too late. I wish I could've learned about the history that pertains to my family's specific diasporic experience much earlier than college.

In high school, I remember briefly learning about Japanese internment during World War II and discussing its morality. That was the extent of my Asian American history education. I know now that a uniquely Asian American studies curriculum speaks on Asian Americans' lives and diasporas past and present which would allow youth to reflect on their history in an interdisciplinary way. Asian American history broadens students' horizons and develops culturally competent individuals.

Today's political climate offers little room for Asian Americans to remain complacent. At a time when Asian Americans are pitted against one another and other minorities to create infighting rather than generate cross-racial solidarity, it is essential that our youth learn about America's history so that we never repeat the atrocities of the past. What good is history if it is not taught? What good is history if we make the same mistakes? What good is history in public education if it does not encompass the unique Asian American experience? I strongly believe requiring Asian American history courses in the K-12 curriculum would provide a safe space for our youth to view one another in more humane contexts and create a positive learning experience for all.

I respectfully request a favorable report on HB960.

Thank you,



Nelson Chen

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