

Testimony in Support: HB 960 Education – Public Schools – Asian American History Curriculum Requirement

From Susan Yu, Derwood, Maryland

Monday, February 27, 2023

Dear Chair Atterbeary and Ways and Means Committee,

I've been a resident of Montgomery County, Maryland for 39 years. I support HB 960.

Since moving to Maryland, I have worked in federal service with time spent at Walter Reed, Bethesda Naval Hospital and the FDA. Maryland has been my place of residence and work. I am so lucky I live in the fourth most diverse state and close to three of the top five most diverse cities in the U.S. (recent study by WalletHub). Yet, even with this rich diversity, we still have our issues of hatred, most recently with incidents of antisemitism.

I'm Chinese American. Born in Pittsburgh, PA. Three generations of my family were separated by the Chinese Exclusion Act making me a 4:2 (4th/2nd generation). A great grandfather who worked as a railroad worker to help join this nation, a grandfather who worked in a laundry to support his family in China, my father who became a mechanical engineer. I was the only one that was raised with a father and a mother. They all faced discrimination, even my Dad, who felt being Chinese limited his chance at promotion. It's really never gone away as shown by recent incidents and hate speech against the Asian American community nationwide. A recent example includes comments about a sitting Chinese American Congresswoman (who has given her life to public service) have her loyalty questioned on a cable station.

What can any of us do to change the trajectory of hate? Is it just human nature or can we change the course of history? We absolutely can try. Education is the key. Teach children that all of us, except for the First Nations, came from somewhere else. That America is built on the foundation of a democracy and all of us have a right to equality. Teach children how government works and lessons of history, so we can stop repeating our mistakes. And finally, children need to learn and embrace each other's stories, led by educators who understand what is at stake.

In this moment, Maryland has a unique opportunity to become a leading edge in change. Although HB 960 is specifically for Asian American history, it can be the "Go For Broke" breakout for leading the charge for ALL our stories to be told. The resources are out there to get this done for everyone, including the great staff at Maryland State Department of Education and bipartisan grassroots coalitions of teachers, parents, and students, like Make Us Visible.

We have so much to learn from each other and a country whose future depends on us. I am, because of who we all are.

Please favorably vote HB 960 on to the next step. Thank you so much for your consideration.