

Committees: Ways and Means

Testimony on: HB1363 Education - Public Schools - Asian American History Curriculum Requirement

Position: Favorable

28 February 2024

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

My name is Mahesh Aitha and I support House Bill 1363 which would require the Maryland State Board of Education to develop and mandate Asian American history in our schools' K-12 curriculum.

I am here to share my thoughts based on the facts about why there is a need to mandate the Asian History in our schools. Recent data suggests that Maryland has more than 10% Asian American population, and it is still growing at a rapid speed. Almost all of these Asian American families have their roots in Asia, and it is very important for these families to learn their respective languages to stay connected with their grandparents, relatives, families and friends. For these families language is essentially a bridge between the generations. The modern science tells us that the bilingual and multi lingual kids develops higher cognitive skills compared to their peers speaks only one language. As a language advocate I can tell this with my personal experience it is a big challenge to teach the kids languages without connecting with the kids with the history, culture and heritage.

I share my personal experience about how history helps in multiple ways, I collaborated with a non-profit university and established a language school at Frederick County and we teach Telugu language to the kids. At the beginning kids were experienced difficulty in learning. Later we came to know that kids were having issues with connecting the language and its importance in their day to day life. We came up with a strategy and included the history and culture along with language classes and we identified a few Asian American historical events and celebrated in the class. All these methods were helped the kids to connect and identify themselves with the language and helped to learn quickly.

Another important point is about diversity and inclusiveness, every child should feel safe and secure in the schools. The Asian History in the schools will surely help to connect the students from different cultures and communities. All these will help to build the positive, supportive and inclusive school system.

I am here to support strongly to the House Bill 1363. I thank you for giving me the opportunity express my views on the bill.

I will end my testimony with a quote by great Mahatma Gandhi "Our ability to reach unity in diversity will be the beauty and the test of our civilization."

Thank you, God Bless America.

Thank you,
Mahesh Kumar Aitha, M.S., Ph.D.
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