

Madame Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkens and Honorable Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for HB1363. As a former educator/administrator and AAPI community leader, I believe that integrating AAPI history, culture, and contributions into our state K-12 curriculum is both necessary and beneficial for our students and society as a whole.

The AAPI community has played a significant role in shaping American history and culture, yet our stories and experiences are often overlooked or marginalized in mainstream education. For many in our society, members of the AAPI community have, and continue to be, viewed as “visitors” and not as part of the accepted fabric of American society as a whole. I’ve been in this Country for about 70 years, and still, on occasion, am told to “go back to where I came from”. And, I am sure that my three children, who were born in this Country, were reminded at some point in their lives, to do similarly.

By incorporating AAPI curriculum into our schools through state legislation, we ensure the material is taught in a comprehensive and meaningful manner and students, as well as teachers, are presented with an accurate understanding of our nation's diverse heritage.

As an Administrator with the former MCPS Department of Human Relations, I was responsible for overseeing the HR17 and HR18 courses offered to MCPS teachers. In this capacity, I served as a guest instructor for the HR17 course in Montgomery County

(mandated for new teachers to the County) for many years, and realized first hand that those responsible for educating our students were often not knowledgeable themselves on the AAPI community, its history, and outreach strategies to its students and their families. How could they, when they were never exposed to such inclusive curriculum as students, and now as teachers?

Asian Americans are the fastest growing minority group in the United States and make up over 8% of our state population. While some districts in Maryland may have smaller Asian American populations and less diverse Boards of Education, it is precisely in these areas where the inclusion of AAPI curriculum is most critical. By providing students in all districts with access to diverse perspectives and narratives, we can foster empathy, respect, and understanding among future generations.

In districts with large Asian American populations, the inclusion of AAPI curriculum will help validate the identities and experiences of AAPI students. Too often, these students feel marginalized or invisible in the classroom due to the lack of representation in the curriculum. Studies have shown that students perform better academically when they see themselves represented in the curriculum and feel a connection to what they are learning. By providing all students with access to diverse perspectives and narratives, we can create a more inclusive learning environment where every student feels valued and empowered to succeed.

Legislating the inclusion of AAPI curriculum statewide will ensure that ALL students, regardless of their district or background, have the opportunity to learn about the rich

history and contributions of AAPI communities. The extent to which it is covered will ultimately depend on implementation at the local level. Therefore, it is essential for the Maryland General Assembly to provide guidance and support to districts in effectively integrating AAPI curriculum into their schools.

In conclusion, I urge your committee to pass HB1363 and prioritize the inclusion of AAPI curriculum into our state education curriculum. By doing so, we can create a more inclusive and equitable education system that prepares all students to thrive in our diverse society.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Ginny Gong,

Former secondary school educator

Former MCPS Administrator: /Department of Human Relations

Former Montgomery County Gov't Director: Department of Community Use of Public Facilities

Past National President: OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates