

Committees: Ways and Means

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

Position: Favorable

28 February 2024

Madam Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Honorable Members of the Committee,

Please allow me to introduce myself, I am Mark Kraham Director of Communication for the Asian American Center of Frederick Maryland. Representing an organization that has a mission of helping immigrants, I have become keenly aware of the lack of understanding that can at times present tense situations between individuals who lack knowledge of other cultures.

Asian American Studies can enhance appreciation of Asian American history, to help foster an understanding of current issues facing Asian American populations today, inspiring the need for persons of all backgrounds and diversity to come together.

The history of oppression of minorities, including Asian Americans, must be told in order to better understand the challenges that were faced but also how obstacles were overcome.

It would seem that “Asian Hate” would have long ago been deemed as unacceptable, however especially during the pandemic derision, and denigration seemed nearly as pervasive as Covid itself. Often with blame being leveled at any Asian as the possible purveyor of the virus. I know this firsthand as I heard the comments being made against Asians as I witnessed how community members and my Chinese American wife experienced it.

Asia is home to half the world's population. Studying the culturally and historically diverse areas of Asia provides opportunities for students to discover new global perspectives.

In an increasingly diverse and global world, it is more important than ever to understand the complexities of our lives and societies. Asian Americans have a rich history in the United States and their experiences are integral to the fabric of American society.

Indeed, there are currently institutions of higher education with curriculum focused on Asian American culture, history, and contributions. It seems logical that a dynamic state, such as Maryland, that prides itself on inclusion and being forward looking would through the State

Board of Education develop a curriculum and content standards for a unit of instruction on Asian American history in the public schools.

Respectfully submitted,

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