

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 Olivia Poole 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.

At my high school/middle school in Albany, New York, I wish I had noticed that there was such a gap in knowledge of the history of people who look like me. I did not learn about the Anti-Asian sentiments and how the harmful "model minority" myth has been perpetuated throughout US history.

In college at The George Washington University, I have had to unpack the history of Asian Americans in the US in a few of my classes, but mostly with my own directed research. I came to learn about the damaging stereotypes of the "perpetual foreigners" view and the assumption that Asian Americans don't speak English. Having this vital education earlier on can combat the serious consequences of not having Asian American history in our classrooms. Especially after the COVID-19 pandemic began, people saw how the lack of Asian American education led to displays of ignorance, hate, and violence toward Asian Americans.

It is vital that our students learn about the past of all of our American people. The teaching of US history is not complete without the inclusion of the Asian Americans that helped build this country into what it is today. Without the inclusion of Asian American studies in school curriculums, Maryland students grow up unknowing of the many contributions that Asian Americans have had on our country, including their involvement with the advancement of Civil Rights. Students also fail to learn about many important historical events, such as the internment of Japanese Americans, the massacre of Chinese immigrants in Los Angeles, and the Chinese Exclusion Act.

Four other states--Illinois, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Rhode Island--have already mandated Asian American Studies for K-12 schools. I believe it is our time to do so too.

I respectfully request a favorable report on HB1363.

Thank you,

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