

**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 Andrew Procter 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.

As someone who grew up in the South, I experienced instances of racial insults or racial questioning as a high school student of Asian mixed-race. Ironically these came from non-white students. I believe all K-12 students can benefit from a greater understanding of racial diversity and the contributions of Asian Americans to US history. In fact there is an opportunity to turn the misunderstanding and fear that unfortunately cause racial tensions, into a love and respect that comes from understanding another people's contributions.

There is a multitude of history that can benefit and inspire not only Asian-American students but students of all backgrounds. A quick look over recent decades reveals a treasure trove of examples for students to discuss: former Secretary of Energy Steven Chu, whose technical leadership was key in solving the Deepwater Horizon oil spill; Kal Penn and John Cho, who were early millennial Asian pioneers in TV and film; and MiMi Aung, the NASA scientist of Burmese descent who headed the Ingenuity helicopter mission, making 50 historic flights on Mars. Even without mentioning the historic Oscars of "Everything Everywhere All at Once", there is plenty to inspire.

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,

Andrew Procter, PhD

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