

Committees: Ways and Means

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

Position: Favorable

28 February 2024

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

My name is Tan Phu Quach and I support House Bill 1363 which would require the Maryland State Board of Education to implement teaching Asian American history in our schools' K-12 curriculum.

The United States of America is the country of cultural diversity, and of inclusiveness. Ever since I started my high school years in America, I have not yet felt that embracement for the culture, for the country where I was from, but rather shame for the current form of political government of my home country of Vietnam. Because from three classes of social studies: American Studies 2, U.S. Government, and Modern World History, I barely heard Asian history mentioned or being taught. But the "Cold War", "communism", and "dictatorship" are what are being mentioned and described beautifully. From those required classes, I can feel that my heritage, my cultural values, and the contributions to the development of human history that Vietnam made for itself and for the world have all been replaced with the picture of violence and dictatorship. The 4000-year history of Vietnam which included countless fighting for its independence, for its democracy, and for a peaceful nation has never been mentioned but the depiction of the threat of global democracy.

Vietnamese culture in specific and Asian culture in general, have long been neglected and under-promoted. In my school, only 5% of the students are Asian, when it comes to AAPI months, we could barely see our culture being embraced. There were no events nor grand announcements about the month of our culture, nor did anyone have time to care about it. May was not popularly celebrated like September and October, nor gloriously celebrated like February but rather silently passed by.

How come we can have a day off for Yom Kippur, when students can embrace and celebrate their culture but we do not have a day off for Lunar New Year? How come there are classes for European history and African history but there were no Asian studies classes in high school? In my home school, it is really difficult to find another person who speaks Vietnamese or other Asian languages. Finding an Asian student is like finding water on dessert. But on desserts, water is very valuable. Thus it deserved to be honored and to be respected. Places like Frederick city, where "water" is more sacred, it needs to be conserved and honored even more intensely!

It is vital that our students learn about the past of all of our American people. The teaching of U.S. 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.

I respectfully request a favorable report on HB1363.

Thank you,

Tan Phu Quach

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