

Hello and good afternoon to the members of the Maryland General State Assembly. My name is Ananya Porwal, and I am a sophomore at River Hill High School as well as the sophomore vice president of the organization Project Lotus. We represent a youth advocacy organization focused on increasing representation and awareness of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) cultures and histories. Today, I stand before you to express my strong support for the bill HB1363 requiring the development and implementation of an Asian American history curriculum in public schools starting in the 2025-2026 school year.

The inclusion of Asian American history in our educational system is not just a step towards diversifying our curriculum; it is a crucial move towards acknowledging and respecting the rich history and contributions of Asian Americans to our nation. This curriculum will serve as a vital tool in combating stereotypes, fostering understanding, and promoting inclusivity among students from all backgrounds.

Moreover, the introduction of this curriculum is an opportunity for all students to gain a deeper understanding of the diverse narratives that shape our nation. For the 11 years I have gone to school in Howard County, I have not learnt anything about the history of my own culture, causing me to forget important things about where I came from. I am not even aware who the president of my birth country is whereas I am expected to know all 46 presidents of America. This bill is a crucial step towards dismantling stereotypes, combating xenophobia, and fostering a culture of empathy and respect. In a time where the Asian American community, among others, has faced heightened challenges and discrimination, affirming our commitment to comprehensive and inclusive education is more important than ever.

I stand firmly in the belief that education is a powerful tool for change. By supporting this bill, I am not only advocating for the rightful inclusion of Asian American history in our schools but also for the broader ideals of diversity, equity, and inclusion that define our collective aspirations as a society. It is my sincere hope that, through this curriculum, students will not only learn about history but also be inspired to contribute positively to the ongoing narrative of our nation, grounded in mutual respect and understanding.

I believe that appreciating our combined history is the foundation for a more united community. Therefore, I urge the General State Assembly to support this bill in order to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn about the significant contributions and experiences of Asian Americans. I hope that you consider my perspective and thank you for your time.