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Maryland House Ways and Means Committee

OCA-APA Advocates
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Support of House Bill 1363 - Education - Public Schools - Asian American History Curriculum Requirement

As leaders and advocates in OCA-APA Advocates, Greater Washington DC Chapter, we are in strong support of Maryland House Bill 1363 - *Education - Public Schools - Asian American History Curriculum Requirement*. This bill would allow for content standards for an expanded American History curriculum to include the history and contributions of multiple diverse communities such as the experiences of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders.

There has been a stark rise in anti-Asian hate incidents by nearly 150% nationally since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The roots of anti-Asian hate are systemic and deeply embedded, yet the Asian Pacific Islander American (APA) experience has long been invisible in school curriculums. Nearly 13%, (12.6%) of incidents were reported from school age youth suggesting that anti-Asian racism may begin at earlier ages. In particular, bullying of Asian American students can lead to significant impacts on psychological health, well-being, self-esteem, and development.

It has been well documented that talking and teaching children about acceptance and looking beyond the differences in others can only help in the bigger conversation of prevention. When kids appreciate the benefit that stems from learning and living in a diverse community, there is less interest in labeling what might be different or calling it out to others. It's in that place that prevention occurs and schools stay safe and bullying mitigated.

The integration of greater diversity into the education system would reflect the diversity of students in Maryland. Within a broader diversity framework, this bill would offer an opportunity to create greater sensitivity to the APA experience, reduce stereotyping, school bullying, and ultimately hate incidents in the longer term. There have been many positive contributions of APAs to the United States including as political leaders, arts, sciences, and the building of infrastructure such as the Transcontinental Railroad. Through both oral and written historical sources, the story of the APA community's vibrancy, civic engagement, resiliency, and hopes for a brighter future emerge and provide opportunities to teach about helping to build the very fabric of America. Without specific inclusion in the curriculum, these experiences and contributions have been largely unknown, which contributes to the othering of the APA community as perpetual foreigners, when in fact there is an over 400 year history of the Asian American community in the US as well as a long rich history of the Pacific Islander community. Through efforts to increase the visibility of APA contributions to the United States by highlighting contributions made through leadership, scientific advancement highlighting their commitment and love for their country, we are able to educate our children not only of the strength and diversity and richness of the United's states history but also inspire the youth to and provide role models for the next generation.

In closing, an expanded American History content standards to include the history of contributions of multiple communities in the US, including the APA community, would be a positive benefit to reflect the diversity of communities living in Maryland and create greater sensitivity to diverse experiences from a young age, which may lead to longer term positive impacts such as reductions in stereotyping, bullying, and hate incidents. Therefore, we urge the committee to pass Maryland House Bill 1363 - *Education - Public Schools - Asian American History Curriculum Requirement*.

Sincerely,

Siddarth Sharma
OCA-DC VP of Membersip