

March 3, 2025

Testimony on: HB1323 Education – Public Schools – Asian American History Teacher Professional Development and Resources

Committees: Ways and Means

Position: Favorable

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

My name is Safora Noor and I am representing the Dear Asian Youth nonprofit to write and express our strong support for Maryland HB1323, which seeks to enhance professional development opportunities for educators by incorporating Asian American history training programs into the state's Continuing Professional Education Development program. This initiative is a crucial step toward ensuring that Maryland's educators have access to high-quality, vetted resources that will enrich the curriculum and provide students with a more inclusive and accurate understanding of American history.

Growing up in Baltimore County schools, I came to school rarely learning about people like me that contributed to American History and I read books with characters that rarely represented me. The lack of curriculum that included the contributions of Asian Americans in US history and the absence of someone to relate to or look up to as an Asian American lead me to feel like there weren't people like me that contributed to America, despite Asian American immigrants doing astonishing things throughout American History. However, because I was not taught about the history of my people in this country and continue to see myself unrepresented in the education I receive, I often feel a sense of not belonging in the classrooms that I am a part of. This should not be the case for any student. Every student has the right to feel like their experiences, background, and ideas are included in an educational space. I don't want other kids like myself to feel like they don't belong in a classroom because the curriculum they are learning doesn't include them.

I know so many other Asian students who faced racial microaggressions during and after the COVID Pandemic and that would not have been the case if every student was educated on the diversity present in Maryland Schools. By diversifying the curriculum to include Asian History and Asian experiences, the state can not only help create students that are mindful and empathetic to people with differences, but also decrease the amount of AAPI hate present in school systems. I urge the state to pass HB 1323 as it is imperative to our generation and to allow Asian American students like myself to feel like they belong in classrooms.

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.

Studies show that a diverse and inclusive curriculum leads to higher student engagement, improved academic outcomes, and a greater sense of belonging for students from all backgrounds. By investing in educator training, we can ensure that future generations develop a broader, more accurate understanding of our nation's diverse history.

I respectfully request a favorable report on HB1323. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Thank you,
Safora Noor
saforanoor2@gmail.com
safora.noor@dearasianyouth.org
Dear Asian Youth