

Maureen Wambui

7827 Rolling View Ave, Nottingham, MD, 21236

Maureen.w.m.2030@gmail.com

03/03/2025

The Honorable Members of the House Committee

Maryland General Assembly, Annapolis, MD 21401

Informational Testimony Response on HB1323 with Recommended Amendments - Education - Public Schools - Asian American History Curriculum Requirement

Hearing Date: March 05, 2025

Chairperson and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

Subject: Informational Response on HB1323 with recommendations – Enhancing Inclusivity and Impact for Immigrant and Minority Communities

My name is Maureen Wambui, and I am a proud Immigrant, Parent, Community advocate and resident of Legislative District 8 in Maryland. I commend the Maryland General Assembly for introducing HB1323, which seeks to incorporate Asian American history into public school curricula. This initiative is a critical step toward fostering cultural awareness and inclusivity in our education system. However, to maximize its impact and ensure equitable representation of Maryland's diverse immigrant and minority communities, I respectfully propose the following amendments to the bill.

1. Broaden the Scope to Include Other Underrepresented Histories

While Asian American history is vital, the bill should also encompass other historically marginalized communities, including African, Latino, Middle Eastern, and Caribbean histories. Maryland is home to a significant and diverse immigrant population, and a comprehensive curriculum should reflect this diversity. Expanding the scope will create a more inclusive and representative educational framework. Modify the bill to require an "Immigrant and Minority Histories Curriculum" that covers Asian American, Latino, African, Middle Eastern, and Caribbean contributions to the U.S.

2. Emphasize Local and State-Level Immigrant Contributions

In addition to national historical events, the curriculum should highlight the specific contributions of immigrant communities in Maryland. Lessons should include the impact of Korean-owned businesses, African immigrant entrepreneurs, Latino labor contributions, and other ways diverse communities have shaped the state's economy, politics, and culture.

3. Allocate Funding for Curriculum Development and Teacher Training

For successful implementation, educators must be equipped with adequate training and resources. The bill should include designated state funding for:

- Developing comprehensive curriculum materials,
- Professional development for educators,
- Providing teaching aids and supplementary learning resources. Proper training ensures that teachers can accurately and effectively teach these subjects to students.

4. Engage Immigrant and Minority Communities in Curriculum Development

To maintain authenticity and inclusivity, curriculum development should be a collaborative effort. The bill should require the Maryland Department of Education to consult with:

- Local immigrant advocacy groups,
- Historians specializing in diverse cultural histories,
- Educators from immigrant backgrounds. This ensures that historical narratives are accurately represented and avoid misinterpretation.

5. Implement Interactive, Story-Based Learning Approaches

Traditional textbook-based learning may not fully engage students, especially those from immigrant backgrounds. Schools should be encouraged to incorporate:

- Oral histories from immigrant elders,
- Documentaries and digital storytelling,
- Guest speakers from immigrant communities. By making history more relatable, students can see themselves reflected in the curriculum, fostering deeper connections and engagement.

6. Require Periodic Review to Assess Effectiveness

To ensure that the curriculum remains relevant and effective, the bill should mandate a review process every 3-5 years. This review should involve educators, community representatives, and policymakers who assess implementation progress and recommend necessary updates.

7. Provide Additional Support to Schools in High-Immigrant Areas

Some school districts serve a higher concentration of immigrant students who may require additional resources to engage with the curriculum effectively. The bill should consider additional funding or support for:

- Bilingual learning materials,
- Cultural enrichment programs,

- Community engagement initiatives to strengthen student and family participation.

HB1323 presents a meaningful opportunity to promote cultural awareness and inclusivity in Maryland's education system. By incorporating these recommended amendments, the bill can more effectively serve the state's diverse immigrant communities, ensuring that all students receive a comprehensive and representative education.

I urge the Maryland General Assembly to consider these amendments to enhance the bill's impact and inclusivity. Thank you for your time and commitment to advancing education for all Maryland students.

Respectfully submitted,

Maureen Wambui