

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

Committees: Ways and Means

Position: Favorable

1 March 2025

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

My name is Anna Jhon. I am a Walter Johnson High School junior and an OCA-DC Education Advocacy Intern. I am writing to express my 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 crucial to 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.

As a student serving as the Montgomery County Regional Association SGA Secretary and many other leadership positions in MCPS, I have spoken to numerous students about their experiences throughout Maryland.

There is one general consensus. We don't feel represented. As a student who has been in Maryland since elementary school, I have faced numerous racially motivated comments, from slurs to the belittlement of my looks. Growing up in a predominantly caucasian area, I had to accept these conditions. Going through COVID-19 as a growing teenager was a tumultuous process. constantly dealing with what my identity truly was, there were times I hated who I was because I was, in the eyes of people, "yellow." "Too Asian" to have my culture, ethnicity, and identity be belittled with no thought left me feeling ashamed for who I was for multiple years throughout middle school to high school.

So, when I learned that other parts of the country upheld the diverse values of representation by incorporating histories from multiple backgrounds and that had made students feel represented, I was honestly appalled that Maryland had not done that yet.

For over the past two years, I have worked as a student and as an intern to advocate for this bill, and knowing the effectiveness of policy, I recommend that the professional development legislation be brought to strong consideration. It is time that we start uplifting as a state to present an accurate depiction of our state by uplifting those who have been silenced for too long.

Our students must 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 who helped build this country into what it is today. Without the inclusion of Asian American studies in school curriculums, Maryland students grow up not knowing 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,

Anna Jhon

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