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**TESTIMONY ON HB#0875 – FAVORABLE**

**Commission on History, Culture, and Civics in Education**

**TO:** Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins and members of the Ways & Means Committee

**FROM:** Richard Keith Kaplowitz

**My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#0875, Commission on History, Culture, and Civics in Education**

The goal of the commission would be to make recommendations to the Maryland State Board of Education and would provide the State Department of Education with expert representatives from historically minoritized communities (including Native American, Latine, Black/African American, Asian American, sexual and gender minorities, and persons or individuals with disabilities) to serve as advisors regarding the implementation of curriculum that is inclusive of their American histories. Allowing for representative commission would be the gateway to accurately representing and reflecting the diversity in Maryland. An example is the inclusion of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) history to be taught in Maryland public schools which includes over 61,000 AANHPI students. Four other states-- Illinois, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Rhode Island--have already implemented Asian American Studies for K-12 schools.

President Donald Trump is waging an all-out assault on education by issuing executive orders designed to [privatize schooling](#), tttack [immigrant](#) and [transgender](#) students, [prohibit solidarity with Palestine](#), chill dissent on college campuses and [censor](#) discussions of race, gender, sexuality and systemic oppression in schools.

One of his latest [orders](#), misnamed “Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling,” threatens federal funding for schools that teach truthfully about Black, Indigenous, and people of color’s history or structural inequality, while also banning discussions of gender identity. These actions are about indoctrinating young people with what I call “[uncritical race theory](#)” — an ideology that denies systemic racism, either dismissing it altogether or reducing it to nothing more than isolated individual bias. <sup>1</sup>

It is up to Maryland to resist this dangerous ideology that believes learning the truth about the messy American history, good and bad, is indoctrination rather than the truth that Maryland’s youth need to know to navigate their way in a diverse and conflicted world.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://truthout.org/articles/trumps-goal-of-burying-history-wont-work-if-teachers-refuse-to-stop-teaching/>

The failure to commission a program like this would neglect the diversity of students all across Maryland. Maryland students are learning the same outdated curriculum from 40 years ago, growing up unaware of the many contributions that different groups have had a notable impact upon our country, including their involvement with the advancement of Civil Rights. Diving deeper into AANHPI inclusion, it is important to recognize students also fail to learn about many important historical events and topics, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Model Minority Myth, and the massacre of Chinese immigrants in Los Angeles. The commission of this program would not only lead to the education of our students about important historical events that have failed to be recognized but would also effectively push for the inclusion of all cultures and lived experiences of students within Maryland school curriculums.

Our students must grow up knowing the influences that shaped our country.

We can begin this process by establishing the Commission on History, Culture, and Civics in Education to make recommendations to the State Board of Education and the State Department of Education to further the discovery, interpretation, and learning of the history, culture, and civics of the United States and Maryland and provide equitable learning outcomes consistent with certain provisions of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

We can teach the full panoply of American history or a version that only furthers the white Christian nationalist view that only the contributions to American of white men and important to know and to teach. This bill frees us from this cribbed view of civics and citizenship.

**I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report and pass HB0875.**