



10400 Little Patuxent Parkway  
Suite 450  
Columbia, MD 21044  
☎ 410.992.1923  
✉ [info@beluminus.org](mailto:info@beluminus.org)  
🌐 [www.beluminus.org](http://www.beluminus.org)

For more information, scan  
the following QR Code:



March 3, 2025

Gabriel Maximilian Moreno, Esq.  
CEO  
Luminus Network  
10400 Little Patuxent Pkwy, Suite 450  
Columbia, Maryland 21044  
E: [gmoreno@beluminus.org](mailto:gmoreno@beluminus.org)  
P: 410.303.3899

**TESTIMONY ON**  
**HB 1323 - Education - Public Schools - Asian American History Curriculum Requirement**  
**POSITION: FAVORABLE**

To: Chair Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Vice Chair Delegate Jheanelle K. Wilkins, and  
Members of the Ways and Means Committee

From: Gabriel Maximilian Moreno, Esq.

My name is Gabriel Maximilian Moreno, Esq., and I am the CEO of Luminus Network, headquartered in Columbia, Maryland. I am also a resident of District 13. For over 40 years, Luminus Network has empowered immigrants by providing legal and social services to help them achieve self-sufficiency and success. I am submitting this **testimony in strong support of HB 1323**, Asian American History Curriculum Requirement, which seeks to require the inclusion of Asian American history in Maryland's public school curriculum.

Luminus is not only an organization dedicated to supporting immigrant communities but also recognizes the vital role that education plays in fostering understanding, inclusion, and equity. Additionally, as an acting Commissioner on the Office of Attorney General's Commission on Hate Crime Response and Prevention, I stand firmly in the belief that we must be accepting of all cultures and histories to combat hate and build a more just society. This bill is a critical step toward ensuring that all students receive a comprehensive and inclusive education that reflects the diverse narratives that have shaped our nation.

Asian American history is American history. Yet, for too long, it has been largely absent from our classrooms. Many individuals in the United States are unaware that the fight for birthright citizenship, the struggles against racial segregation, and the foundation of the United Farm

Workers all have deep roots in Asian American contributions and activism. Without this education, our students are missing essential pieces of our collective national story.

Moreover, the need for this legislation is more urgent than ever. The rise in anti-Asian hate crimes and violence in recent years has underscored the dangers of ignorance and misinformation. According to the Pew Research Center, about one-third of Asian adults (32%) personally know someone who has been threatened or attacked because of their race or ethnicity since the COVID-19 pandemic began. This number is even higher among certain groups: 39% of Chinese Americans, 35% of Korean Americans, and 31% of Vietnamese Americans have reported knowing someone targeted. Younger Asian Americans, particularly those under 30, reported the highest levels of awareness, with 44% knowing someone who had been attacked.

The pandemic fueled a disturbing wave of discrimination against Asian Americans, leading many to fear for their safety. As of 2021, one-third of English-speaking Asian adults expressed concerns about being physically attacked, and many changed their daily routines to avoid potential threats. These experiences demonstrate the real-world consequences of racial ignorance and bias, which education can help address. By teaching the rich history of Asian Americans, we can work to dismantle harmful stereotypes and promote solidarity.

Asian Americans are one of the fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States, with over 23 million Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders contributing to our society. Yet, many students, including Asian American youth, feel invisible in the school curriculum. By integrating Asian American history into our education system, we affirm the value and significance of these communities in shaping our country's past, present, and future.

Maryland has an opportunity to be a leader in this movement, joining states like Illinois<sup>1</sup> and New Jersey<sup>2</sup> that have already taken steps to mandate Asian American history in their schools.

The inclusion of Asian American studies will not only enrich the learning experience for all students but also help foster solidarity among diverse communities by highlighting shared struggles and alliances throughout history.

The implementation of HB 1323 is not only necessary but also achievable. Organizations such as the Asian American Education Project<sup>3</sup> have already developed high-quality, free curriculum

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<sup>1</sup> Hauck, Grace Hauck. 'A watershed moment': Illinois becomes first state to mandate Asian American history in public schools, USA Today, July 9, 2021, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2021/07/09/illinois-mandates-asian-american-history-public-schools-teach-act/7472690002/>. Accessed March 3, 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Chavez, Nicole. *New Jersey becomes second state to require Asian American history to be taught in schools*, CNN, January 18, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/18/us/new-jersey-schools-asian-american-history/index.html>. Accessed March 3, 2025.

<sup>3</sup> The Asian American Education Project, <https://asianamericanedu.org/>. Accessed March 3, 2025.

materials and teacher training resources that can be utilized to ensure smooth and effective integration of this subject matter into existing history and social studies courses.

I urge this committee to pass HB 1323 to ensure that future generations of Maryland students receive an education that truly reflects the diversity of our nation. This bill is a step toward a more inclusive, accurate, and just education system—one that prepares students to engage in a multicultural society with knowledge, empathy, and understanding.

For these reasons, I strongly urge the Members of the Ways and Means Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 1323.

Thank you for your time and consideration.