



Maryland House Ways and Means Committee
Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary, Chair

February 20, 2025

In Support of HB0875: Commission on History, Culture, and Civics in Education

As leaders and advocates in OCA – Asian Pacific American Advocates – Greater Washington DC Chapter (OCA-DC), we submit this testimony in strong support of Maryland House Bill 0875, which seeks to establish a Commission on History, Culture, and Civics in Education. This bill represents a critical step toward fulfilling the goals outlined in the Blueprint for Maryland's Future by expanding the American history curriculum to reflect the rich histories and contributions of diverse communities.

The current educational curriculum, while comprehensive in many areas, often overlooks the narratives and contributions of underrepresented communities, including Asian Pacific Americans, African Americans, Latinos, Indigenous peoples, and other ethnic and cultural groups. House Bill 0875 offers an opportunity to address this gap by ensuring that all students see themselves and their communities reflected in what they learn. Inclusive education fosters understanding, empathy, and respect, helping students develop into informed and compassionate citizens.

This effort is particularly urgent considering the alarming rise in hate crimes nationwide. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, hate crime incidents have increased by nearly 150%, with anti-Asian hate crimes being among the most prominent. These incidents are not isolated but are rooted in long-standing stereotypes and misinformation. School environments are not immune to these societal challenges; bullying and harassment can significantly affect students' psychological health, well-being, self-esteem, and development.

Research has consistently shown that educating children about acceptance and understanding differences can lead to more inclusive communities and safer school environments. When students appreciate the value of diversity, they are less likely to engage in or tolerate bullying and discrimination. An inclusive curriculum fosters critical thinking and helps students challenge stereotypes rather than perpetuate them.



The establishment of a Commission on History, Culture, and Civics in Education would ensure that Maryland's curriculum reflects the diversity of its student population. According to recent data, Maryland is one of the most diverse states in the nation, with over 60% of students identifying as racial or ethnic minorities. It is only fitting that their education includes the histories, struggles, and achievements of their communities. Representation matters: when students learn about role models who share their backgrounds, they are inspired to pursue their goals with confidence and resilience.

Moreover, inclusive education benefits all students, not just those from underrepresented communities. Exposure to diverse perspectives enriches learning, promotes cultural competency, and prepares young people to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world. It equips them with the skills to navigate differences, work collaboratively, and build inclusive communities. The positive impacts of this bill extend beyond the classroom. By promoting understanding and reducing ignorance, it can lead to a long-term decline in stereotyping, bullying, and hate incidents. An investment in inclusive education is an investment in a safer, more cohesive society—one where every child feels valued and empowered.

In closing, we firmly believe that establishing a dedicated Commission on History, Culture, and Civics in Education will not only enrich the educational experience for all Maryland students but also contribute to a more inclusive and just society. We urge the committee to pass Maryland House Bill 0875 and take this vital step toward creating a future where diversity is celebrated, and every child's history is honored.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Adam Lee, PhD

President, 2025 and 2019, OCA-DC