

The Honorable Members of the Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: Written Testimony in Support of HB0770 – Korean American Day

Dear Honorable Delegates,

My name is Young Smith, and I am the President of the League of Korean Americans (LOKA) and a Commissioner on the Governor's Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs. I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of HB0770 to establish January 13th as Korean American Day in Maryland.

As a first-generation Korean American immigrant, the story of Korean Americans in this country is deeply personal to me. When I first came to the United States, I carried with me both hope and uncertainty. Like many immigrants, I left behind familiar places, language, and family in pursuit of opportunity and a better future. Starting over in a new country was not easy. Every day required courage — learning a new language, navigating unfamiliar systems, and building a life from the ground up.

Many Korean Americans of my generation share this experience. We worked long hours, often in small businesses or service jobs, while quietly building stable lives for our children. Our parents and elders sacrificed comfort and security so that the next generation could have greater opportunity. Their stories are rarely told, yet their perseverance has helped shape the communities we live in today.

Korean American Day honors the legacy of the first Korean immigrants who arrived in the United States in 1903 and recognizes the generations who followed. Today, Korean Americans are an essential part of Maryland's social and economic fabric — serving as small business owners, healthcare workers, educators, public servants, and community leaders. Their contributions are woven into the everyday life of our state.

Through my work with LOKA and with first-generation Korean American seniors, I often hear stories of hardship, resilience, and quiet determination. Many endured war, poverty, and immense personal sacrifice before immigrating here. To see Maryland recognize their journey would mean so much to them. It tells them that their struggles mattered, that their work mattered, and that their history is now part of Maryland's history.

Recognizing Korean American Day is not only about honoring the past, but also about inspiring the future. It provides an opportunity for young people to learn about immigrant resilience, cultural heritage, and the importance of civic engagement in building stronger communities.

For the generations who came before us and the generations who will follow, I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB0770.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Young Smith

President | League of Korean Americans (LOKA)

Commissioner | Governor's Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs