

Committees: Ways and Means

Testimony on: HB627 – Commission on History, Culture, and Civics in Education – Establishment

Position: Favorable

2/16/25

Chair **Jheanelle K. Wilkins**, Vice Chair **Jessica Feldmark**, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

I write in strong support of HB627, which establishes the Commission on History, Culture, and Civics in Education.

Maryland's public schools serve one of the most diverse student populations in the nation, yet our history and civics curriculum has too often failed to fully reflect the experiences, contributions, and perspectives of all communities. HB 0627 represents a critical step toward addressing this gap by creating a representative, transparent body charged with strengthening how students learn the history, culture, and civics of the United States and Maryland.

This legislation aligns closely with the goals of the **Blueprint for Maryland's Future** by promoting equitable learning outcomes regardless of a student's family income, race, ethnicity, disability, or other characteristics. The proposed Commission brings together educators, higher education representatives, and members of Indigenous, Latino, African American, Asian American, and Pacific Islander, LGBTQIA+, and disabled communities to ensure that educational standards are informed by lived experience as well as professional expertise.

As advocates with **OCA – Asian Pacific American Advocates (OCA-DC)**, and as engaged members of Maryland's communities, we believe inclusive education is essential to fostering understanding, empathy, and respect among students. When young people see themselves and their communities reflected accurately in the curriculum, they are more engaged learners and better prepared to become informed, compassionate citizens.

The need for this work is especially urgent in light of the troubling rise in hate and bias incidents nationwide in recent years. Schools are not immune to these societal challenges. Bullying, harassment, and discrimination can have lasting effects on students' mental health, self-esteem, and academic success. Research consistently shows that inclusive, accurate education helps students challenge stereotypes rather than absorb them, contributing to safer and more welcoming school environments for all students.

HB627's emphasis on transparency—requiring public access to meetings, materials, and reports—along with its annual reporting and review process, ensures accountability and continuous improvement. By thoughtfully examining whose stories are told and how they are taught, Maryland can strengthen civic understanding while honoring the full diversity of our state.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Ways and Means Committee to issue a favorable report on HB627. Thank you for your leadership and continued commitment to Maryland's students.

Sincerely,

Anna Jhon

OCA-DC Youth Council Founder

Rockville, Montgomery County, Maryland