

Committees: Ways and Means

Testimony on: HB1059 - Education - Asian American History - Professional Development and Library Materials

Position: Favorable

4 March, 2026

Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and Honorable Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Cleo Burton, and I write in strong support of House Bill 1059.

As a Chinese American adoptee raised by two loving Caucasian parents, I bring a unique lived perspective to the conversation surrounding Asian American history in K-12 education. While I have been fortunate to grow up with such supportive parents, my adoption meant that I did not naturally learn about my cultural heritage within my home environment. Much of that discovery depended on external spaces, including school.

Throughout my education, I experienced a significant absence of Asian American stories, contributions, and historical context in the curriculum. That absence was not just academic; it sent an unintended message about whose histories were valued and whose were overlooked. Without structured opportunities to learn about Asian American history, students like me were left to navigate questions of identity largely on our own.

HB1059 represents the critical next step in ensuring that Asian American history is implemented consistently, thoughtfully, and sustainably across Maryland's schools. Establishing curriculum requirements is important, but meaningful implementation requires ongoing support for educators and access to high-quality instructional resources.

By strengthening professional development opportunities and investing in school library materials, this legislation moves beyond symbolic inclusion and toward lasting, systemic change. It helps ensure that inclusive instruction is not dependent on individual initiative or local capacity, but reflects a coordinated statewide commitment.

This bill aligns with Maryland's broader goals of educational equity and excellence. When educators are properly supported and students have access to accurate, age-appropriate materials, the result is deeper learning for everyone.

For Asian American adoptees like myself, representation in education can be affirming. It provides context, belonging, and an opportunity to understand our heritage within the broader

American story. Education is not solely about academic standards, rather it is about cultivating understanding, respect, and shared humanity.

I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB1059. Thank you for your continued leadership and commitment to Maryland's students and their curriculum.

Thank you,

Cleo Burton

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