

Committees: Ways and Means

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

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Wilkins and Members of the Committee,

My name is Yvonne So. I am an MCPS mom of three boys and the Executive Vice President of OCA-DC, an Asian American civic organization. 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 fails to fully reflect the experiences, contributions, and perspectives of all communities. HB627 represents a critical step toward addressing this gap.

As a parent and an advocate, I believe inclusive education is essential to fostering understanding, empathy, and respect among students. Research consistently confirms the benefits of accurate representation in curriculum, including increased student engagement, stronger self-esteem, and improved academic performance. Inclusive education also helps students challenge stereotypes rather than absorb them, contributing to safer and more welcoming school environments.

Too often, efforts to address bias in schools are reactive—responding only after harm has occurred. By equipping students with a fuller and more honest understanding of diverse histories and cultures from the start, HB627 helps prevent prejudice before it takes root. A well-rounded education fosters critical thinking, civic engagement, and a stronger sense of community—values that are essential for preparing young people to be informed and compassionate citizens.

HB627's emphasis on transparency, including 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.

The stakes are too high to delay this work any longer. Maryland students deserve meaningful progress in diversifying the K–12 public curriculum. I am ready to roll up my sleeves to help put this plan into action, and I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB627.

Thank you for your leadership and continued commitment to Maryland's students.

Sincerely,
Yvonne So