

Committees: Ways and Means

Testimony on: HB1059 – Education – Asian American History – Curriculum and Professional Development

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Wilkins and Members of the Committee,

My name is Yvonne So. I am a MCPS mom of three boys and the Executive Vice President of OCA-DC, an Asian American civic organization. I write in strong support of HB1059, which advances the inclusion of Asian American history in Maryland's public school curriculum and strengthens educator preparation through professional development and instructional resources.

As a parent and an advocate, I believe inclusive education is essential to fostering understanding, empathy, and respect among students. Research consistently demonstrates that when students see themselves reflected in what they learn, they experience stronger engagement, improved academic outcomes, and greater self-confidence. Just as importantly, inclusive curriculum benefits *all* students by challenging stereotypes and promoting critical thinking rather than allowing misconceptions to persist unexamined.

Too often, conversations about bias and discrimination in schools are reactive — responding only after harm has occurred. Education is one of our most powerful preventive tools. By equipping students with a fuller and more honest understanding of the diverse communities that shape our state and nation, HB1059 helps prevent prejudice before it takes root. A comprehensive history education fosters civic literacy, empathy, and a shared sense of belonging — all of which are foundational to preparing informed and engaged citizens.

HB1059 is especially important because it recognizes that inclusion must be supported by implementation. Teachers want to teach diverse histories well, but too often lack the training, instructional materials, or structured guidance to do so effectively. By strengthening professional development opportunities and ensuring access to appropriate resources, this bill helps move inclusion from aspiration to practice. It provides the framework necessary for meaningful, sustainable integration of Asian American history into classroom instruction.

The stakes are too high to continue offering students an incomplete narrative of American history. Asian American history is American history. Maryland students deserve an education that reflects that truth.

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

Sincerely,
Yvonne So