



ASIAN AMERICANS AND PACIFIC ISLANDER COMMISSION

HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUITY
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Date: March 2, 2026

To: Maryland House of Delegates members Kriselda Valderrama, Harry Bhandari, Mark Chang, Sarah Wolek and Chao Wu

From: The Howard County Asian American & Pacific Islander (AAPI) Commission

Re: Support of House Bill 1059: Education – Asian American History – Professional Development and Library Materials (Favorable)

Dear Delegates, Valderrama, Bhandari, Chang, Wolek, and Wu:

We are the proud members of the Howard County Asian American & Pacific Islander (AAPI) Commission (“the Commission”) appointed by County Executive Calvin Ball. We are writing in **support of House Bill 1059** with regard to requiring Maryland’s education officials to review and promote Asian American history training for teachers and create a grant program that funds educator training and school library materials on Asian American history.

The Commission comprises 20 members representing diverse ethnicities among the AAPI community and agencies in Howard County. The Commission is dedicated to advising the Howard County Executive on policy initiatives, advocating for issues that impact the AAPI community, and cultivating a safe, welcoming community where AAPI residents feel seen, valued, and heard.

With this charge, we are compelled to speak about the importance of House Bill 1059. For too long, the U.S. has promoted a limited perspective of history, omitting a vast swath of stories, contributions, successes, and failures of the people and movements that have shaped this great nation. In the Howard County Public School System, over 23% of the student population is Asian or Pacific Islander, yet only 7% of the district’s employees identify as Asian or Asian American. Research has shown all students benefit from educator diversity and increasing Asian American Educators in Maryland is a critical need. We also believe it is vital to expand the content knowledge of all teachers with AAPI history.

Educators are foundational to igniting the minds of young people and may themselves be limited by their own education and experiences. At the same time, it is equally important that the diverse Asian American and Pacific Islander student population is reflected in the curriculum, as representation can help affirm young identities. This is why the professional learning grant and monies for library materials proposed in this bill are critical to increase our teachers' own understanding and critical thinking about AAPI history. Learning this history from source documents and the organizations dedicated to serving AAPI communities will bring a layer of depth to the material and enrich our students' understanding of the complex history in the U.S. Including AAPI people and stories in the teaching of history also helps to address the misconception of Asian Americans being perpetual foreigners, if their contributions throughout American history are highlighted.

The determination of people who immigrated from Asian countries and the resilience of the Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander community have all shaped this nation through pivotal moments—from immigration and

labor struggles to civil rights litigation, wartime incarceration, and post-9/11 discrimination—and it is essential that these contributions and experiences be fully recognized and understood.

We respectfully request your support for this legislation to ensure that future generations gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the history and contributions of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and South Asian communities.

Sincerely,
Membership of the Howard County AAPI Commission