

March 2, 2026

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

Committees: Ways and Means

Position: Favorable

Chair Jheanelle Wilkins, Vice Chair Jessica Feldmark and distinguished members of the Ways and Means Committee,

As founder of the Montgomery County Progressive Asian American Network (MoCoPAAN), I urge you to vote for **Maryland HB1059**. The bill will expand professional development opportunities related to Asian American history and for teachers and administrators statewide and allocate appropriate funding to the schools to procure materials.

Asian Americans are painfully aware that public understanding of Asian Americans is key to their safety and well-being. During covid, they reported historical record of hate incidents across the country. Recently, ICE knocked on doors in Minneapolis asking homeowners if they knew where Asian Americans lived in their neighborhoods. Asian Americans were forcibly taken from their homes because the agents did not perceive that immigrants were Americans.

How would **HB1059** address this challenge? The bill will:

- **Leverage schools as primary places of civic education.** They teach people who are the future policy makers and residents.
- **Introduce history with broader perspectives.** At Montgomery County Public Schools, I co-created and co-led professional development training for teachers, administrators and staff. I was told by one attendee that in the 15 years that she had attended the trainings, she had not seen one on Asian Americans. The absence showed. When asked to name Asian Americans, the participants who first spoke up named historical figures like Mao and Genghis Khan – historical figures who never had set foot in the U.S.
- **Move away from volunteer-led and uncompensated professional development training.**

Thirteen states have enacted statutes or laws mandating Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) studies in the K-12 curriculum. Maryland was not among them.

HB1059 will potentially address the gaps through the provision of professional trainings and library materials. I respectfully urge passage of the bill in support of increasing the number of educators who can relate to 7.9% of the state's population, and in turn, imbue all students with a fuller, more inclusive and accurate understanding of Americans and their history. Our democracy thrives on an informed citizenry.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Aryani Ong

Founder & Board Chair

Montgomery County Progressive Asian American Network (MoCoPAAN)