



HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUITY
9820 Patuxent Woods Drive, Suite 237 • Columbia, Maryland 21046 • 410-313-6430
Calvin Ball, County Executive, • Brandee Ganz, Chief Administrative Officer
LaKeisha McClendon, Administrator

hrc@howardcountymd.gov

To: Chair Delegate Jheanelle K. Wilkins, Vice Chair Delegate Jessica Feldmark, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee

From: The Howard County Human Rights Commission

Re: TESTIMONY REGARDING House Bill 1059: Education - Asian American History – Professional Development and Library Materials (Favorable)

Dear Chair Delegate Wilkins, Vice Chair Delegate Feldmark, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

Across Maryland, 7.3% of residents are Asian. Howard County is even more richly diverse, with 20% of its residents of Asian descent. The Howard County Human Rights Commission believes that all cultures should be valued and that HB1059 provides an inspiring strategy for ensuring that public school students develop a deep appreciation for Asian American history and culture.

HB 1059 would require Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to evaluate history training programs available from such experts as the Smithsonian Institution, National Council for Social Studies, and the Asian-American Foundation, and determine whether these courses should be included in MSDE's continuing professional development program. MSDE would then publicize the offerings and create an Asian American History Grant program that would give educators up to \$2,000 to make it easier to access the courses. The bill would also enable school libraries to apply for \$1,000 grants each year to purchase materials on Asian American and Pacific Islander history. The bill would mandate \$500,000 per fiscal year for this program beginning in 2028.

We understand that the state is currently operating under significant budget constraints. Therefore, while we support the intent of this bill, we are concerned about a mandate to appropriate \$500,000 each year for the grant program, given the state's present fiscal environment. Thoughtful, phased, or cost-efficient implementation will help ensure that the legislation achieves its intended impact without placing undue strain on limited budgetary resources.

Sincerely,
The Howard County Human Rights Commission