

Committees: Ways and Means

Testimony on: HB0627 Commission on History, Culture, and Civics in Education - Establishment

Position: Favorable

16 February 2026

My name is Jasper Chen, and I am an 8th grader at Pyle Middle School in Montgomery County.

For the last two years, I have testified in support of creating this Commission because Asian American history and experiences were missing from my education. I shared how that absence contributes to stereotypes, misunderstanding, and students like me feeling invisible in our own classrooms. That bill did not pass, and since then, nothing has changed. That is why I am testifying again in 2026 in support of HB627.

I also want you to understand the cost of student advocacy. In past years, I missed an entire day of school—classes, tests, and sports—just to wait for hours to speak for two minutes. This year, because of my brother's testing schedule and my own academic and sports commitments, it was simply not possible for me to testify in person. Choosing between school responsibilities and civic engagement should not be this difficult for students.

Each year I return, I have to ask myself whether the sacrifice is worth it. I believe strongly in this cause. But when there is no progress, it begins to feel like my time and effort—and the voices of students like me—do not truly impact the outcome.

This lack of action is especially concerning given recent events, when stereotypes and misinformation about minority communities have led to harassment and real harm. Education is one of the most powerful tools we have to prevent ignorance and bias before they grow into something worse.

HB627 is the minimum Maryland can do to begin addressing these gaps. Students should not have to repeatedly ask to be seen in their own education.

I respectfully urge you to pass HB627. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Jasper Chen