

Committees: Ways and Means

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

Position: Favorable

1 March 2026

Madam Chair, Madam Vice Chair, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

The Asian American Student Union supports HB1059 that would expand access to professional development and funding for school libraries to purchase materials related to Asian American history.

My name is Katrina Manalang, and I am a senior at the University of Maryland, College Park. I currently serve as the Advocacy Liaison on the executive board of the Asian American Student Union (AASU) at UMD. As a Filipino-Vietnamese American, I firmly believe in the importance of representation within our public education system. Representation in education should not be a privilege; it should be the standard.

Growing up, my first exposure to Asian American history was through taking the Advanced Placement courses of A.P. World History and A.P. U.S. History. My education placed Asian American history within the context of U.S. imperialism and exclusion, where I learned about discriminatory policies such as the Chinese Exclusion Act, the Japanese internment camps during World War II, and U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. While these histories are important to acknowledge, they provided a limited narrative. Often, the Asian American experience is aggregated under a monolithic category of “Asian” and perpetuates the harmful “forever foreigner” rhetoric that questions our belonging in America. Knowing about our own histories should not be limited only to specialized programs. Understanding who we are and where we fit within a broader global context should be accessible to every student starting from an early age.

It was not until college that I began to fully comprehend the unique role that Asian Americans play within shaping history. Through facilitating dialogue with other students and my parents, hosting advocacy-oriented events, and studying Asian American history through personal interest, I began to cement my identity within a greater cultural story. The biggest lesson that I grew to understand was: my story is not just my own, but is a tapestry of my neighbors and generations before me.

In taking an Asian American Studies course and being involved with advocacy through AASU, I learned about the steadfast resilience and activism of Asian Americans within the context of

labor movements, anti-war organizing, and the fight for ethnic studies led by groups like the Third World Liberation Front. These narratives represent Asian Americans not just as subjects of discrimination, but as trailblazers who have paved the way in our collective struggle for justice.

Change begins with education. Expanding access to Asian American history helps students see themselves in the stories they learn and carve spaces of belonging and community for all.

I respectfully request a favorable report on HB1059.

Thank you,
Katrina Manalang



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