



February 1, 2022

Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Hearing

Senate Bill 304

Education- Public Schools - Asian American History Curriculum Requirement

Testimony from Julie Park (juliepar@umd.edu) Director & Professor, Asian American Studies UMD, College Park)

I am the Director of the Asian American Studies Program at the University of Maryland, College Park. This testimony is in SUPPORT of the proposed legislation.

Our Asian American Studies Program recently celebrated its 20th Anniversary. Thousands of students have taken our courses in Asian American history. I have seen firsthand the benefits of an Asian American Studies curriculum for students in terms of knowledge acquisition, identity development, and enhancing the ability of students of all backgrounds to navigate a more diverse world.

Asian American Studies at the University of Maryland was born out of student demands. And this is the case in our state as well. Hundreds of students have now signed petitions and advocated for more course content on Asian Americans and other racial minority groups. Our program continues to grow because demand is high.

Students come to our flagship university with very little exposure to the history and experiences of Asian Americans. At the beginning of this semester, one of our instructors surveyed her class of 40 students and asked how often they were taught about Asian Americans in high school. Fully one-third of the class said “none at all” and 65% said “a little.” There is room to grow here.

I represent the field of Asian American Studies and know that there is a wealth of material that can enrich the student learning experience in this state.

Sincerely,

Julie Park, PhD
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Associate Professor, Sociology
University of Maryland, College Park