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February 3, 2022

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COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
BILL: SB 304 – Education – Public Schools – Asian American History Curriculum Requirement
POSITION: Support

The Horizon Foundation is Howard County’s community health foundation and the largest independent health philanthropy in the state of Maryland. We lead community change so everyone in Howard County can live a longer, better life.

Advancing racial equity is one of the Foundation’s strategic priorities and is central to our mission of improving the health and wellness of *everyone* in Howard County. As part of this work, we convene the Howard County Equity Collaborative, which is comprised of a group of grantees that apply a racial equity lens to their work and collaborate on equity issues related to the social determinants of health, including education. We have worked closely with the Howard County Chinese School as part of these efforts and with other organizations representing the large and diverse Asian American community in Howard County.

To that end, we urge a **favorable vote on SB 304**, which would require the State Board of Education to develop curriculum for units of instruction on Asian American history in public schools in Maryland. This bill would lead to the development of a statewide curriculum that better reflects Asian American experiences and contributions, in Maryland and our region, while allowing local boards to determine the amount of instruction and implementation of these standards.

Unfortunately, there are numerous examples of anti-Asian discrimination and persecution in our country’s history. Education can be an effective and important tool to combat the racism that fuels this hate and misunderstanding. It is important to diversify and update our educational curriculum to better reflect the contributions and experiences of groups who have not been fully represented in the past. The contributions of Asians to American history are taught incompletely, if at all, throughout our state’s schools. SB 304 seeks to address this problem by ensuring that a unit of Asian American history is taught at least once during elementary, middle and as a required course for graduation at the high school level.

As a result of COVID-19-related fears and misinformation, we have seen an increase in anti-Asian bullying in schools across the country. SB 304 provides a pathway to raise the voices of individuals and communities that have not been fully heard in the past, and show that those lives and histories matter. The addition of Asian American history to the curriculum is critical to change discriminatory perceptions that persist in our country. This bill gives the students of Maryland a chance to appreciate a more complete history of our state and nation, which includes the contributions and struggles of Asian Americans.

For the Horizon Foundation, equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to live a long, healthy life – and no one is left behind because of who they are. We support SB 304 and its efforts to promote better understanding of Asian American history, elevate the voices of Asian American leaders and fight against systemic racism in all forms.

Therefore, we urge a **favorable report on SB 304**. Thank you for your time and consideration.