

February 1, 2022

Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Hearing

Senate Bill 304

Education- Public Schools - Asian American History Curriculum Requirement

**Written Testimony from Jamie Lok (402 King Farm Blvd, Ste 125-150, Rockville MD 20850, mocopaan@gmail.com), Montgomery County Progressive Asian American Network (MoCoPAAN)
FAVORABLE**

I am a Board Member of the Montgomery County Progressive Asian American Network (MoCoPAAN) and the parent of two children who attend public schools in the state. This testimony is in FAVOR of the proposed legislation.

MoCoPAAN's mission is to raise the visibility of Asian Americans, to collectivize and lift up progressive voices and to offer allyship through strategic communications. In so doing, MoCoPAAN works to demonstrate that Asian Americans have a multitude of voices. MoCoPAAN serves as a voice on issues that affect people of diverse backgrounds: representation, equity and inclusion; immigrant rights; and racial discrimination and profiling. MoCoPAAN carries out its mission through speaking engagements, community education, and advocacy.

MoCoPAAN members represent diverse backgrounds, including Chinese, Indian, Korean, Vietnamese, Japanese, Indonesian, Cambodian, and Filipino Americans; first and second generation immigrants; and MCPS students and parents in our county. Based on their years of experience with Asian American activism on the national level, MoCoPAAN leadership regularly engages in public engagement opportunities to educate the broader community on the role Asian Americans have played in shaping U.S. history along with other communities of color.

The spike in reported hate and violence directed at Asian Americans during the pandemic has made clear that more education on Asian Americans is needed. MoCoPAAN heard from students about the sense of fear and isolation. They expressed concerns about returning to school. Also, they said that they would've felt more supported in their learning environment if they had seen the Asian Americans' history, contributions and challenges represented in the curriculum, as well as diverse faculty and systems support.

In general, ethnic studies exposure like that proposed in this bill is associated with positive learning outcomes in the K-12 public school context.ⁱ A 2010 study of a Filipino American history curriculum showed positive outcomes in terms of identity and sense of community among both Filipino and European American students.ⁱⁱ

Learning about the history of Asian Americans and other non-white groups will also further the understanding and analytic skills needed to navigate our diverse world and promote inclusion for all students.

Around the country, a movement is underway to promote Asian American history in state bills. Already, bills have been passed in Illinois and New Jersey. MoCoPAAN supports the inclusion of ethnic studies in the K-12 curriculum. Senate Bill 304 is in alignment with this goal, and therefore, MoCoPAAN expresses support for its enactment.

ⁱ Sleeter, Christine E., and Miguel Zavala. *Transformative ethnic studies in schools: Curriculum, pedagogy, and research*. Teachers College Press, 2020.

ⁱⁱ Halagao, P. E. (2010). Liberating Filipino Americans through decolonizing curriculum. *Race Ethnicity & Education*, 13(4), 495-512. H