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Joint Committee on Fair Practices and
State Personnel Oversight

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Howard County Senate Delegation

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Support SB 304: Education – Public Schools – Asian American History Curriculum Requirement

Background:

- American history, as it is currently taught in Maryland public schools, does not adequately include or reflect the contributions and struggles of Asian Americans.
- Studies have shown that teaching a more diverse historical curricula can provide better academic outcomes, including an increase in high school graduation rates.¹
- Other states have required that public school students are taught about various racial and ethnic groups' roles throughout American history.
 - In October 2021, California Gov. Gavin Newsom was the first to sign a bill that requires all public high school students to take an ethnic studies course in order to graduate.²
 - Other states that have passed bills requiring more ethnic studies in their school curriculums, include Connecticut, Florida, New York, and Ohio.
 - Illinois and New Jersey have become the first two states to require Asian American history be taught in public schools.

What Does SB 304 Do?

- SB 304 requires the State Board of Education to develop curriculum content standards for units of instruction on Asian American history in public schools in the state.
- This statewide curriculum would better reflect Asian American experiences and history in Maryland, and our region, and ensure consistency of this education across the state.
 - Each county board of education would need to adopt age-appropriate standards in line with the State's standards, but would maintain the flexibility to determine the amount of instruction and implementation of these standards.
 - Each county board of education would be required to ensure that a unit of instruction on Asian American history is taught at least once during elementary school, once during middle school, and once in a history course required to graduate from high school.
- The new standards would include lessons on the events of Asian American history and contributions as a community to the economic, cultural, social, and political development of the United States.

¹ "Ethnic studies increases longer-run academic engagement and attainment" by S. Bonilla, T. Dee, & E. Penner, 2021, PNAS 118 (37).

² "California makes ethnic studies a high school requirement" by J. Gecker, 2021, AP News.

Why is SB 304 needed?

- As a result of COVID-19-related fears and misinformation, the country has seen an increase in anti-Asian violence in our communities and bullying in our schools.
- Since 2018, hate crimes targeting Asian Americans have more than doubled in Maryland.
- According to a March 2021 national survey, 64% of Asian Americans reported being asked “Where do you come from?” The assumption being that they are not from the US.³
- The addition of Asian American history to the curriculum is critical to change discriminatory perceptions that persist in our country and promote peace.
- Age-appropriate instruction on the involvement and role of Asian Americans in American history is necessary for students to receive a well-rounded, inclusive education.
 - Asian American education will help increase student engagement and build character, as students learn how people from their own or different backgrounds faced challenges, overcame them, and contributed to American society.
 - All of us, including the individuals and descendants of the Asian American community, deserve to learn about the accomplishments and struggles of people who were excluded, or whose lives were misrepresented, in the histories that were written.
- The state of Maryland is the correct jurisdiction to pursue education standards, because the educational attainments of all Marylanders should require common understandings of our collective history.

³ “Anti-Asian hate incidents and the broader landscape of racial bias” by J. Wong & K. Ramakrishnan, 2021.
<https://aapidata.com/blog/cross-racial-march2021-survey/>