



MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE ASIAN AMERICAN
AND PACIFIC ISLANDER CAUCUS
MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SENATOR CLARENCE K. LAM, M.D., M.P.H.
CHAIR

DELEGATE HARRY BHANDARI
FIRST VICE CHAIR

DELEGATE MARK S. CHANG
SECOND VICE CHAIR,
OUTREACH COMMITTEE CHAIR

DELEGATE DAVID MOON
SECRETARY

DELEGATE LILY QI
TREASURER

DELEGATE KUMAR P. BARVE
DELEGATE WANIKA FISHER, ESQ.
DELEGATE KRISSELDA VALDERRAMA

SENATOR SUSAN C. LEE,
CHAIR EMERITUS

TO: Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Chairman
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chairman
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee Members

FROM: Maryland Legislative Asian American & Pacific Islander (AAPI) Caucus

DATE: February 3, 2022

RE: SB304 Education – Public Schools – Asian American History
Curriculum Requirement

**The AAPI Legislative Caucus Supports SB304 – Education – Public
Schools – Asian American History Curriculum Requirement.**

The AAPI Legislative Caucus comprises members of the Maryland General Assembly committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders throughout our state. The AAPI Legislative Caucus seeks to engage the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities in Maryland, and ensure that their legislative and policy goals are represented within the General Assembly. The AAPI Legislative Caucus is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the AAPI community and benefits the state of Maryland.

Students in the state of Maryland cannot have a full understanding of the history of our state and nation without the inclusion of 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

The list of groups was not arbitrarily chosen – it includes the groups of official legislative caucus as well as a category for American Indians (as phrased in the Education article), and flexibility for the State Board and the Maryland State Department of Education to identify others, if appropriate.

This subject not only has academic benefits, but also has the capacity to increase student engagement and build character as students learn how people from their own or different backgrounds faced challenges, overcame them, and made contributions to American society. The AAPI community helped to build this country and the great grandchildren of their descendants

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

deserve to learn about their accomplishments, as all other Americans learn about their heritage. In the long term, the addition of this curriculum will help students build empathy toward their peers while understanding how those in power have marginalized minority groups.

The Asian American History Curriculum Requirement will require the State Board of Education to develop curriculum content standards for a unit of instruction on Asian American history in public schools in the state. County boards and local schools will then adopt age appropriate standards in line with the State's standards. The new standards will 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. There is a growing need for Maryland students to receive factual and well-rounded education in American History. In a free society and democracy all of our constituents deserve to hear a more inclusive and diverse American history.

Across the country, states are starting to require more ethnic studies in their school curriculums, including bills passed in California, Connecticut, Florida, New York, and Ohio. Illinois and New Jersey have taken it a step further, becoming the first two states to require that Asian American history be taught in public schools. We believe the State of Maryland should pursue these educational standards because the educational attainments of all Marylanders require a common understanding of our collective history. Expanded American history is about our collective experience as a nation, without leaving out important chapters because they spoil an imagined projection of a perfect past, when many groups were ostracized, ignored, and ridiculed. Our past belongs to all of us, and we all must have the same facts to draw from to decide our collective future.

For these reasons, the AAPI Legislative Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on SB304. Thank you for the opportunity to express our support.