



## HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

3430 Courthouse Drive ■ Ellicott City, Maryland 21043 ■ 410-313-2013 Voice/Relay

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February 3, 2022

Senator Paul Pinsky, Chair  
Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee  
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: **TESTIMONY OF SUPPORT**: SB 304 – Education – Public Schools – Asian American History  
Curriculum Requirement

Dear Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan and Members of the Committee,

My name is Angela Cabellon and I have worked in state and local government for nearly 15 years. I currently serve as the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for Howard County Executive Calvin Ball. For the last several years, I have also served as the incident commander for the COVID-19 pandemic and work very closely with the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) community, which is 18% of Howard County's population.

I have worked on education policy as a deputy in Governor O'Malley's Office of Policy as the Assistant Secretary in the Department of Human Services, a local Social Services Director in Montgomery County, and currently, spearheading initiatives and policies impacting the AAPI community in Howard County.

In my current capacity as a Liaison to the AAPI community on behalf of the County Executive, I have overseen the establishment of Howard County's first AAPI Workgroup. This Workgroup has been active in education, health, business and cultural initiatives. The AAPI Workgroup also issued a strong statement standing up against AAPI Hate during the hardest time in our history and following burglaries of Asian businesses just one year ago. I am also working in collaboration with our community members on the establishment of an AAPI Cultural Center so that we have a welcoming place for all to enhance and provide a full array of educational opportunities.

As a public policy advisor, liaison to our AAPI community, and an alumna of the University of Maryland, College Park where I, along with several student organizers pushed for the successful establishment of the Asian American Studies Program, I urge a **favorable report on Senate Bill 304**. This proposed legislation 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 hate in our country's history. Education can be an effective and important tool to combat the racism that fuels this hate and misunderstanding.

I am proud that more than twenty years ago, University of Maryland gained the first Asian American Studies program in the region. As the President of the Asian American Student Union and then the President of the Student Government Association, I was able to take see through the program's implementation and even take classes before I graduated in 2002.

I was deeply motivated because when I was a student at Eleanor Roosevelt High School in Prince George's County, I did not have a deeper understanding of the contributions and experiences of Asians in America, ranging from building the Transcontinental Railroad to the unfortunate Japanese American Internment.



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It was not until college that I understood the scope of Asian American contributions, as well as the modern social perils of the model minority myth and the impact of Asians being perceived as perpetual foreigners.

It is important to diversify and update our educational curriculum to better reflect various contributions and experiences of groups who have not been fully represented in the past. The contributions of Asian Americans 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 high school.

Asian American Studies should not be relegated to higher education. It should just be a part of the educational curriculum and normalized, as Asian-derived people have been in America as early as the 1600's.

As a result of COVID-19-related fears and misinformation, the country has 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.

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

*Angela Cabellon*

Deputy Chief Administrative Officer and Liaison to the AAPI Community  
Office of Howard County Executive Calvin Ball