

**Written Testimony for SC 2198
Submitted by: Rebecca Nelson
Testifying as Proponent**

Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance committee,

My name is Rebecca Nelson, and I have lived, studied, worked and raised a child in Columbus, Ohio for 34+ years. The city of Columbus and the state's demographics have changed dramatically during this time. When I first moved here in the 1980's it was an occasional experience to see other AAPIs (Asian American Pacific Islanders). Ohio's AAPI population is one of the state's fastest-growing racial/ethnic demographic groups, having increased by 40% between 2000 and 2009. Central Ohio is now home to over 100,000 AAPIs.

Despite this demographic increase, it is still rare to see AAPI representation in elected and appointed positions, in subject matter taught in our schools, and in specific human service offerings. In all her years in the K-12 school system, my daughter never experienced a teacher or school staff member who looked like her, or had a strong understanding of our family's experiences. The history of AAPIs was never addressed. As a graduate student at OSU, someone repeatedly left a sign on the windshield of my '76 Dodge Dart. It was a simple face with slanted eyes and a line drawn through the face. I would remove it, only for a new sign to be placed. This went on for about 6 month before it abruptly ended. I never found out who did it, but years later I still recall the anxiety and fear in the pit of my stomach as I left my academic advising post and headed to the parking lot. The perpetrator was someone knew me (or knew of me) and where I parked each day. Significantly, they felt it was ok to target me with this type of biased action. I felt unsafe and unwelcomed. Years later, as an administrator at the university, I heard many similar stories from students and staff. This type of passive bias occurs every day, and I believe the roots involve our nation's complicated history with Asia and ongoing lack of acknowledgement of the histories, contributions, and needs of AAPI groups. Lack of representation and inclusion helps to fuel the "perpetual foreigner myth" that undergirds acts of bias and hate directed toward AAPIs.

Another unfortunate myth is that AAPI communities are monolithic...that we are all similar to each other. There are multiple immigration histories, languages, and economic realities represented across our communities. The lack of disaggregated data about specific challenges faced by some of our most vulnerable groups continues to be a barrier to understanding and providing appropriate services. The COVID-19 pandemic has elevated these gaps of outreach and services that need to be tailored to specific communities. It is time to support resources such as an Ohio AAPI Commission and Office of AAPI Affairs, and to support existing programs and organizations in the state that serve AAPI communities.

I write this statement today as a longtime resident of Ohio who wants the best for our communities going forward. I respectfully ask for your support of these amendments as an investment in the future of all of our communities' well-being.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Nelson
3022union@gmail.com