

**Testimony for HB 171**  
**Submitted by: Theodore Chao**  
**Organization: The Ohio State University**  
**Testifying as Proponent**

Chair Bird, Vice Chair Fowler Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee,

My name is Theodore Chao, I live in Columbus, and I am a professor of education at The Ohio State University. I am a parent, educator, and concerned citizen, and I am asking this committee to support HB 171 which updates the Social Studies model curriculum to better reflect the histories of all Ohioans by including the migration histories, societal contributions and experiences of a range of communities in Ohio and the United States who are not currently represented in our classrooms.

I believe that passing this bill is good for Ohio and Ohio students because...

- Growing up as a 3rd-generation Chinese Ohioan, I've often felt a disconnect with my heritage due to the lack of representation in our state's history curriculum. An updated model curriculum that includes the stories and contributions of Asian Americans in Ohio would be a source of pride and connection for my family and me. It would not only allow us to see ourselves reflected in the history of our state but also educate others about the diverse tapestry of cultures that contribute to the richness of Ohio's history. This inclusion would be especially empowering for young Asian Americans and other non-white Ohioans, like the students in my community, who long to see their backgrounds and experiences acknowledged and celebrated in their education.
- The absence of a curriculum that truly reflects the diversity of Ohio has had a profound impact on me and my family. As a 3rd-generation Chinese Ohioan, the lack of representation in our state's educational narrative has often left us feeling invisible and marginalized. This omission has not only affected our sense of belonging but has also limited our understanding of our own history within the broader context of Ohio's development. For my community, especially the younger generation, this gap in the curriculum means growing up without role models who look like them in their textbooks, leading to a sense of disconnection from their heritage and the larger story of our state. The impact extends to students of all backgrounds, who are deprived of a comprehensive understanding of the diverse fabric of Ohio society. By not seeing the full spectrum of our state's history, including the contributions and challenges of Asian Americans, we all miss out on the opportunity to build a more inclusive and empathetic community.
- As a professor of education, I recognize Ohio's unique opportunity to lead in shaping our future through a social studies curriculum that delves into the deep truths of our identities, fostering richer educational experiences and enhancing the employability and innovative capabilities of the next generation. The proposed H.B. 171 is a significant step in this direction. It not only provides an updated model curriculum with rich, engaging options for teaching and learning social studies but also equips teachers with diverse activities and lessons. These resources are vital for cultivating respect and

understanding among students from varied backgrounds, ensuring that every student sees their community reflected in their education and can relate to the material they are learning.

- H.B. 171 aligns with the ongoing curriculum review process, enhancing the guidelines our education experts use to develop the best possible curriculum for Ohio's students. By incorporating the experiences, migration stories, and contributions of various communities that are integral to Ohio's history, H.B. 171 addresses a critical gap in our current education system. We fail our children if we do not provide them with an education that mirrors the diverse makeup of Ohio. This bill is a solution to that failure, helping to educate students about the rich tapestry of communities that have long been a part of Ohio's story.
- Importantly, H.B. 171 has garnered substantial support from the educational community, with endorsements from the Ohio Education Association, the Ohio Federation of Teachers, and the Ohio Council of the Social Studies. This widespread backing underscores the bill's relevance and potential to revolutionize social studies education in Ohio, preparing our students for a more inclusive and interconnected world."

I respectfully urge the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee to consider my testimony and to vote yes in support of H.B. 171. Thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify in support of this legislation.