

Testimony for HB 171
Submitted by: Monica Lam
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 Monica, I am a resident in Cheviot, Ohio, I am 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 it will better prepare our teachers and students for the future. It provides the tools and agency for teachers to create an equitable future for students to be successful in the classroom and beyond.

I am a second generation Asian American and during my time in the public school system I had experienced bullying and trauma. My peers perceived me as stereotypes from cartoons and movies. Besides learning about the hardship of the Gold Rush and Chinese Exclusion Act 1882, my peers and I were robbed of the rich history, immigration stories and significant developments implemented by my Asian American heritage.

Knowledge is power and empathy is developed at a young age. I believe that if my peers and I had learned about my cultural upbringing earlier that there would have been more empathy, grace and acceptance given to others with cultural differences in the classroom. I would have felt safe to learn and enjoy my time in the classroom rather than worrying about being bullied and called a racial slur. All children deserve to feel safe, heard and seen in the classroom with dignity and respect.

Everyone's history matters! The United States is a melting pot of all cultures and we would be doing our students a disservice by censoring parts of our history due to cultural nuances. Everyone deserves to learn and be encouraged to be curious. We are building a brighter future for our students today.

Our teachers play an important role in our student's lives. We must equip them with the resources, knowledge and trust to guide our students forward. As our world evolves, our students must be prepared for the future with the most up to date materials to thrive.

A 3rd grade version of myself would have never imagined to be in the position that I am today, testifying and allowing my voice to be heard by our representatives. I would tell my younger self that the people who help make important decisions will protect us and our stories will be heard and shared. We will be understood for our differences and we will be accepted in the classroom. Hold on to that dream. Stand tall and proud. Be the change you want to see in this 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.