

Testimony for HB 171
Submitted by: Karen Jiobu
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 Karen Jiobu. I live in Upper Arlington, and I am a retired laboratory director with over 30 years of service and the last 15 years have volunteered as a health care adviser and as an interim executive director of a community based organization. I was the recipient of the 2020 Central Ohio Senior Citizens Hall of Fame for my volunteer work especially toward the elimination of Hepatitis B. 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...

- My grandparents came to Hawaii in the late 1800's to work in the sugar cane plantations. They came from Japan to make a better life. They were able to come to America, because the Chinese were excluded and with the Gentlemen's agreement with Japan, the Japanese were allowed to come to replace the Chinese as laborers.
- My father was born there, and when of age went to Japan to marry my mother's sister. However, my mother's sister did not want to come to America. Whereas my mother found my father extremely attractive and always wanted to come to America. The oldest sister was married off, and then my mother came to America in the 1930's. By this time, my grandparents and father had moved to a small town in central California.
- With the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Japanese Americans were incarcerated. My family (there was my grandmother, mother, father, and 7 children including myself, who was 2 years old at the time). We spent 2.5 years in an internment camp, near Rivers, Arizona on an Indian reservation.
- In 2015, a high school English teacher and history teacher in the Hilltop area of West Columbus, asked if I could come to speak about the internment. The English teacher was having her class read the "Farewell to Manzanar" about a girl that was at the Manzanar camp.
- I prepared a PowerPoint which included the history of this period of our lives through our family album and a little history through photos by Ansel Adams and Dorothea Lange.
- After one of the classes, one student said Ms. Jiobu, "isn't this why the Muslim travel ban" is occurring? Everyone's eyes then turned to the girl in the back who had a scarf on her head.
- I point this out because one of the reasons given for the bill is " H.B. 171 will help foster greater empathy and respect for different communities from a young age, and these children will eventually grow into more empathetic adults and leaders of our state." I think that telling my story helped the class understand that an injustice like the one that had caused the incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans could happen again.

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 provide this written testimony in support of this legislation.