

Testimony Against House Bill 1

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Testifying as Opponent

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Good afternoon, Chair and members of the Public Safety Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

I'm a student who took AP U.S. History in my sophomore year, and in the second semester, we studied the Alien Land Acts, the 1913 law passed in California. These laws didn't just affect one group, they were part of a national trend that blocked immigrants from owning land simply because they weren't eligible for citizenship. That included Japanese, Chinese, Indian, and other immigrants from across Asia.

These laws weren't based on wrongdoing or threats. They were based on fear, racial prejudice, and economic competition. Lawmakers at the time said they were protecting farmland and resources, but what they really did was deny families stability, ownership, and a future.

When I read House Bill 1, I couldn't help but see the similarities. It bars people from owning certain land based on their ties to so-called "foreign adversaries." But just like the Alien Land Acts, it doesn't look at what people have done, it looks at where they're from.

Yes, the bill names national security and infrastructure as concerns. But let's be honest: this isn't about acts of war. This is about economic rivalry and fear of foreign influence, the same fear that once justified discriminatory land laws a century ago.

And again, the people caught in the middle aren't foreign governments, they're individuals. Green card holders, legal residents, small business owners, farmers. People who've lived here for decades, who pay taxes and raise families, who came here for opportunity and safety.

The Alien Land Acts left generations of families unable to build wealth or stability. Some lost their farms. Others were forced to hide ownership under American-born children's names. That history matters, because we said we'd learned from it.

In school, we don't study these laws to admire them, we study them to make sure we never make the same mistakes twice.

So I ask you today: Will we repeat the same pattern under a new name? Or will we uphold the values we say this country stands for, fairness, equality, and justice under the law?

Let's not let history repeat itself. Let's do better.