

Testimony Against H.B. 1

Submitted by: The Chinese Association of Greater Toledo

Testifying as Opponents

May 17, 2025

The Chinese Association of Greater Toledo

Dear Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Miller, Ranking Member Thomas and members of the House Public Safety Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify against House Bill 1. We are the members of the Chinese community in the Greater Toledo area, Ohio. We are writing this testimony against H.B.1.

Many of us in the Chinese community in the greater Toledo area, Ohio came to the United States several decades ago. We came with dreams to seek educational and economic opportunities. We chose America and Ohio as our home because we were inspired by and believe in what is inscribed on the Statue of Liberty, “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” To this day, we still believe in this promise. We never expected to receive a free meal ticket from the U.S. and Ohio government; we believe that in this land of freedom and opportunities, we can instead work hard to realize our dreams. We have proven to ourselves and to American society and to the State of Ohio that we have achieved economic prosperity not only through hard work, but through faith and belief in the fair and just institutions of this nation. We have also contributed to American society and to the State of Ohio by volunteering our services: today, in our community, we have university professors, scientists, doctors, engineers, professional legal workers, researchers, technology developers, healthcare workers, U.S. military members, public school teachers, business owners, and innumerable other professions. We have chosen to support our chosen home by offering our services in every facet of American society. We chose America and Ohio as our home because we can freely choose what and who we want to be in this country and in the State of Ohio that we love and call home. We are eternally grateful for the opportunities that America and Ohio have given us and uphold the ideals that this nation stands for every day.

In our daily lives, we have never felt the need to remind Congress and the Ohio state lawmakers of our important contributions to America and to the State of Ohio, preferring to let our work stand for itself, but in this moment, it is only rational to remind the policymakers that we, Chinese immigrants, built the Transcontinental Railroad; we, Chinese immigrants, helped transform vast lands into productive farms in California; we, Chinese immigrants, contributed to mining, manufacturing, fishing, textiles, and laundry businesses, especially in the West; we, Chinese immigrants, left undeniable marks in science, technology, and academia, winning Nobel Prize in science and making significant contributions to the Manhattan Project, AIDS research, and many more scientific discoveries; we, Chinese immigrants, enriched American culture by introducing Chinese cuisine, arts, culture to the American public; we, Chinese immigrants, made contributions to the Civil Rights Movement that transformed America; we, Chinese immigrants, answered the call to defend America in WWII and continue to defend this country in present military conflicts; in short, we, Chinese immigrants, have given our hearts, hands, and hopes to this nation — just like so many others who came seeking freedom and prosperity. Through hardship and sacrifice, we helped build the foundations of a just and fair America. Our contributions are not only equal to those of our peers, but they are also essential to the story of this country's and the State of Ohio's promise and prosperity. If we had turned away the immigrants who arrived on our shores so many years ago, this country would not be the powerful nation it is today. As such, we feel injured and hurt by H.B. 1 and its clear attempt to discriminate against us. Please allow us to remind the policymakers of the infamous Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. It was the first and only major federal legislation to explicitly suspend immigration for a specific nationality, in this case, the Chinese immigrants. It took 53 years for the U.S. policymakers to rectify this mistake. Let us all remember this infamy so that we never relive what should never have happened. Thus, even as H.B. 1 personifies a profound disregard for our dignity, we hold fast to our gratitude—for the enduring protection the U.S. Constitution, the Supreme Law of the land, which grants us the opportunity to voice our grievances against H.B.1. America thrives when we are united against discrimination in all forms.

We, Chinese immigrants, chose America to be our home and continue to choose America every day because we love this country and appreciate the incredible opportunities it offers us and our children. We have always felt loyal to this country, even though some of us remain legal immigrants. The reason many of us have not yet become U.S. citizens is easily

explained. We love America, but we also love our parents, and we feel a strong responsibility to care for them. Many of us came to America leaving our families behind. Unlike American-born or naturalized citizens, legal immigrants often face restrictions in international travel, needing to apply and wait for visa approvals to visit certain countries. Our decision to remain in this legal status is not due to a lack of commitment and loyalty to the United States, but rather a deep sense of duty to the parents who sacrificed so much to support our dreams of building a life here. In times of medical emergencies, being able to return to our families promptly is critical—and current immigration status can affect that ability. We remain legal immigrants for profoundly human reasons: when our families are in need, we want to be there. To single us out in H.B.1 is unjust and unfounded, especially given the many contributions we have made—and will continue to make—to this country we call home.

Furthermore, to deny us — Chinese legal immigrants— including permanent residents and holders of H1-B, J1, and F1 visas the right to fully participate in this society, including the right to own property, is more than just policy; it is a violation of our basic human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948 after a world shattered by injustice, affirms in Article 17 that, “everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others” and that “no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.” This “everyone” clearly includes us, Chinese legal immigrants— including permanent residents who hold green card and holders of H1-B, J1, and F1 visas. Thus, we are not asking for special privileges, we are simply asking for fairness, for the right to build a life, a home for ourselves and for our American-born children, and a future, just as millions of others have. This is particularly germane in light of the fact that the United States of America is one of the main drafters of the UDHR and our government has always projected itself as an ardent defender of human rights. Thus, it is clear that the section of H.B.1 that singles out, the legal immigrants of certain national origins, not only tarnishes American democracy but also violates our basic human rights because the properties of many of us will be arbitrarily deprived of if H.B.1 becomes a law in Ohio.

According to the 2022 Annual Business Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, 9,500 Asian American owned businesses, which includes Chinese American-owned businesses, with paid employees in Ohio. These businesses employ nearly 97,600 with an annual payroll of \$3.3 billion. Thirty-one percent of the businesses with payroll are in the accommodation and food service sector and these businesses account for 33 percent of the payroll employees. For the state, this sector accounts for 10 percent of the businesses and 10 percent of payroll employees. The data provided by the Ohio Development Agency indicates that 345,000 Asian Americans, and over 21,000 Asian American-owned businesses in Ohio, which provide 64,000 jobs and generate \$11 billion revenue for the Ohio economy. Given the significant role Asian-owned businesses play in Ohio’s economy, particularly in urban centers like Columbus and Cleveland, the enactment of HB 1 could pose challenges. Business owners may need to assess the potential financial impacts and consider strategic adjustments to navigate the changing fiscal landscape.

We will end with a final message for policymakers considering H.B. 1. When you ran for office and swore your oaths, you promised to uphold and protect the rights of the people in your constituencies, including ours. Our desires are not so different from any other American’s: we wish to peacefully build our lives here and to provide our children with opportunities that only America can offer them. We promise our hard work, dedication, and loyalty, as we have always freely given this nation. We ask for so little in return: let our dignity be respected, unviolated and unbroken. As you make your decision to vote in H.B. 1, please remember all the immigrants who, through great struggle, tribulation, and grit, helped build this country into the great nation it is today. We implore you not to make us a scapegoat in an ideological struggle and political rhetoric between two governments. You have the unique power to fortify our state in the image our Founding Fathers dreamed of centuries ago: that America would be a nation built on the belief that all people are created equal. As you consider your vote, please remember: we are stronger together.

Allow us to use an American proverb to express our feelings to you before we end this testimony, “Don’t bite the hand that feeds you.” We, the Chinese immigrants of Ohio, have used our hands to feed America and Ohio just like immigrants from other nations have done. We have done it with hard work, dedication, and loyalty. We are not asking for a “Thank You” card from the policymakers but only asking you not to bite our hands when you are deciding your vote in H.B.1.

We respectfully urge the House Public Safety Committee to consider our testimony and to vote NO on H.B. 1. Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

The Chinese Association of Greater Toledo