

Testimony for HB 171
Submitted by: Junfang Grace Leng
Testifying as Proponent

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

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to submit testimony on HB 171. My name is Junfang Grace Leng, I am a resident of the city of Dublin. I am a data scientist and I volunteer my time in civic engagements. As an immigrant and a parent, I am asking this committee to support the passage of HB 171.

I came to the United States 20 years ago for my Master's degree and have called Ohio home since then. Like many immigrant coworkers who came to Ohio for higher education, we have been contributing our knowledge and technical expertise to serve the community and make it a better place for all. For example, I am very proud that my analysis was a part of the data support to back up the passage of the Distracted Driving law in Ohio earlier this year. However, several of my coworkers experienced various forms of hostility and were being yelled "go back to your country". But this is our country. Our Asian faces don't make us less American and our immigration experiences illustrate the everlasting belief of liberty and the pursuit of happiness. This is one reason why it is very important to include the histories and contributions of all communities in Ohio and the United States who are not currently represented in the K-12 curriculum. When students learn about the full picture of history, it helps to create a more respectful and harmonious society which will attract more talents to contribute to the growth and prosperity of Ohio. This will be increasingly important while Ohio is striving to be the "Silicon Heartland" as celebrated by Governor DeWine.

I am even more concerned about my son's healthy growth and self identity. My son was born in Ohio and he is now a high school Junior. I recall that his middle school social study class had content about child labor in China which made him want to distance himself from his cultural background. I got the impression that, when my son was younger, he could not reconcile his cultural background and his Americanness because Asian American history and contributions were not properly represented in his classroom. This is an even more urgent reason why reflecting all the communities in the K-12 curriculum is so important. Children are the future of our society. When all children feel seen and heard, they have a greater sense of belonging and sense of self. This will create a more engaging and fruitful learning environment and improve the academic achievements and mental health levels for students from different backgrounds.

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

Sincerely,
Junfang Grace Leng