



Maine Equal Justice

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MEJ Testimony in *Support* of LD 957, An Act to Integrate Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander History into the Statewide System of Learning Results

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Good afternoon, Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee. My name is Dina Malual and I am a Policy Advocate with Maine Equal Justice (MEJ), a nonprofit legal aid provider working to increase economic security, opportunity, and equity for people in Maine. We are pleased to testify in support of LD 957.

An inclusive, interdisciplinary education requires the inclusion of Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander history. At a time where many of us are divided, ensuring that students have access to accurate, unbiased history is important.

The exclusion of the diaspora's history erases the many contributions and experiences of Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander people in areas such as work, politics, culture and law. This bill creates an advisory committee to collect information and prepare materials for teaching Asian history and to develop and provide guidance to schools to integrate Asian history into the curriculum. As we continue to see an increase in the Asian diaspora in Maine (specifically Chinese, Vietnamese and Cambodian), requiring this teaching is important, as it shapes the realities of the many people within the community who call Maine home.

LD 957 also requires the Department of Education to develop a process to enable schools to conduct an internal audit of its curriculum to ensure an equitable representation of the diaspora's history and culture. This audit promotes curriculum review and allows for suggestions to ensure teaching persists.

At a time where Asian hate continues to grow, we must stand with the Asian American community. Current law fails to address the root cause of anti-Asian American hate and this bill provides *all* students with an education that is both accurate and inclusive.

Thank you for your consideration. We urge you to vote “Ought to Pass” on LD 957.