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Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and Honorable Members of the Committee On Education and Cultural Affairs. My name is Dania Bowie, and I'm a resident of Cumberland. I am writing in support of LD 957.

Requiring Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) history in Maine is an important step to preventing future violence and harassment against this community. Until it is clear to all Americans how Mainers like me have belonged and lived in our country throughout our nation's history, AANHPIs will continue to be perceived as different from other Americans. Current laws and culture do not get at the root of anti-Asian American hate. We are Americans, but are too often perceived to be foreigners and threats, as opposed to neighbors or even fellow human beings to some.

During and even before the COVID-19 pandemic, I experienced discrimination and harassment as a Filipino American, including when I lived in Richmond and then again in Pittston, Maine. I was born and raised in the United States. Despite this fact, people have frequently spoken to me and created hostile environments for me in public spaces throughout my life. Although my parents are immigrants, there is a long-standing and significant history of Filipino American contributions to our healthcare workforce, food and agricultural systems, the US Navy, and more. We are Americans who deserve to be seen as American. We have been significant contributors to the U.S. economy, our communities, and more. We have contributed as much as anyone else and deserve to live free of discrimination. Awareness of our roles throughout American history, including the modern day, is a first step toward humanizing AANHPIs, as well as preventing people from considering all Asian Americans as "the same". We are not a monolith, like any demographic, and deserve a minimum visibility in our nation's history.

Thus, I urge you to vote "Ought to Pass" on LD957. Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective with the Committee. Thank you!