



Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs

Testimony in Support of:

L.D. 957, An Act to Integrate Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander History into the Statewide System of Learning Results

April 22, 2025

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Noonan Murphy, and distinguished members of the Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs,

My name is Gia Drew, and I am the Executive Director of EqualityMaine, which has been advocating on behalf of Maine's LGBTQ+ community since 1984. We strongly support L.D. 957, An Act to Integrate Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander History into the Statewide System of Learning Results.

The teaching of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) history is especially important in light of the unjust minimization of the contributions of the AANHPI community in Maine and throughout the country. Additionally, inclusive curriculum is a potentially preventative measure against anti-AANHPI bullying, hate, and violence, which have increased in recent years - both nationally and here in Maine.¹ Combating hate starts with educating ourselves, our students, and communities on the legacy of racism and xenophobia in our history, and the understanding that is built can prevent future hate incidents.

Additionally, it is critical for students to see themselves reflected in their studies - it fosters a sense of belonging, validates their identities, and promotes higher engagement and academic success.² Analyzing and challenging dominant narratives and perspectives is an important way to increase student engagement, critical thinking skills, and empathy. And, by incorporating diverse perspectives, experiences, and narratives into curricula, schools can create a learning environment that is inclusive, engaging, and empowering for all students.

We respectfully urge the Committee to vote "Ought to Pass" on L.D. 957. Classrooms are incomplete without the histories, experiences, and contributions of AANHPIs, who have played important roles throughout our country's history.

Thank you,

Gia Drew (she/her)

¹ "Asian Americans in Maine Concerned by Increase in Hate Crimes during Pandemic." WGME, 18 Mar. 2021, wgme.com/news/local/asian-americans-in-maine-concerned-by-increase-in-hate-crimes-during-pandemic.

² Heineke, Amy J., et al. "Using Texts as Mirrors: The Power of Readers Seeing Themselves." *The Reading Teacher*, 26 July 2022, doi:10.1002/trtr.2139.