



TESTIMONY OF ALICIA REA, ESQ.
LD 957 – Ought to Pass

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

Joint Standing Committee on Education & Cultural Affairs
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Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs, greetings. My name is Alicia Rea, and I am a policy fellow at the ACLU of Maine, a statewide organization committed to advancing and preserving civil liberties guaranteed by the Maine and U.S. Constitutions. On behalf of our members, I urge you to support LD 957.

Maine law requires that students in the state's public schools are taught American history, African American studies, Maine studies and Wabanaki studies.¹ This bill would add the requirement of teaching the history of Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) people and their experiences.

Beginning in 2020, violence against Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander people surged across the country. In the years since, hate crimes against AANHPI people have dramatically increased, with reports finding almost half of South Asian adults in the United States experienced a potential civil rights violation and 43% experienced a hate act in 2023.² One way to help decrease violence, prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination against the AANHPI community is to integrate AANHPI history into school curriculum. Given this particular moment in history, following the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise in anti-Asian American racism and xenophobia that came with the pandemic, Maine would benefit from adding Asian American studies to its curricula.³

¹ 20-A MRS §4706 et seq.

² Stop AAPI Hate, *Empowered/Imperiled: The Rise of South Asian Representation and Anti-South Asian Racism*, available at <https://stopaapihate.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/24-SAH-SouthAsianReport-F.pdf>.

³ Human Rights Watch, *Covid-19 Fueling Anti-Asian Racism and Xenophobia Worldwide*, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/12/covid-19-fueling-anti-asian-racism-and-xenophobia-worldwide>.



Children's education should be inclusive and representative of all of our communities. In addition to using an educational curriculum to combat anti-Asian sentiment in Maine, studies show students who see themselves represented in curriculum demonstrate better outcomes.⁴ But in Maine, AANHPI students aren't seeing themselves reflected in their studies, increasing the chances of discrimination and hate.

Please vote that LD 957 ought not to pass to support inclusive classrooms for all.

⁴ Blessing Ngozi Iweuno et al., *Impact of racial representation in curriculum content on student identity and performance*, World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews (2024).