

Chair Rafferty, Chair Murphy, and Distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee.

My name is Ina Indriani Demers, I teach in Portland, and I live in Wiscasset. I have lived in Maine for over 50 years, and I am here today to testify in support of LD 957 to require the inclusion of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI's) history in our State's K-12 classrooms. This history serves as a long-term preventative measure against anti-Asian American bullying, violence, and hate, which we have seen proliferate over the past years in our Maine communities.

I have been a Maine public school teacher in Wiscasset and Portland for over 36 years. I currently teach English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). I have also been elected and served as a school board member in Wiscasset for 6 years, during which I also sat on the Board of Directors at the Maine School Board Association. My students come from many countries on the continents of America, Africa, and Asia. Like me, they and their families call Maine their home and are proud to be here.

When my daughter was at the Wiscasset primary school as one of a handful of Asian Americans, she was embarrassed of who she was because she looked different, even though she was born at the hospital in Damariscotta, Maine!! This changed when her 5th-grade teacher, who had lived in Asia for a few years, brought in Asian things and proudly shared them with the students. That teacher lifted up my daughter's confidence and helped her to believe that she belonged here, where she was born.

So, I strongly urge you to favorably move LD 957 out of committee with haste, because ALL my students need to know that Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders have contributed to this country in many different ways. In turn, this will also encourage my Asian American students to continue contributing to this country.

I thank you in advance for your support in passing LD 957.