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# PATRICK SNYDER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 85<sup>th</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

## Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 232

Assembly Committee on Education

May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Chairman Kitchens and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to testify on this important bill today.

Assembly Bill 232 makes a simple – but important change to state statutes. Current law requires that school boards develop an instructional program to give students an understanding of human relations particularly regarding “American Indians, Black Americans, and Hispanics”. This bill would simply add “Hmong Americans, and Asian Americans” so that the history of these important and growing communities are taught to Wisconsinites.

Wisconsin is home to the third largest population of Hmong Americans of any state in the nation, and the Asian American population in our state has risen 82% since the 2000 Census. I find that many are unaware of the history of how the Hmong people came to live in Wisconsin.

Throughout the Vietnam War, the United States recruited and worked in cooperation with thousands of ethnic Hmong to fight against North Vietnamese and Laotian communist forces in what is referred to as the “Secret War” in Laos.

Hmong soldiers disrupted the supply chain of North Vietnamese soldiers along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. They also helped to protect strategic points such as communication towers and radar stations. They risked their lives rescuing American fighter pilots who were shot down behind enemy lines.

After the fall of Saigon in April of 1975, many of these Hmong patriots and their families fled the region. They left behind their homes, possessions, and communities to resettle in the United States. Each year fewer Hmong veterans remain to tell this important story which is one of many reasons that I think AB 232 is important – it is essential that this story is relayed to future generations.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.



## Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 232

Assembly Committee on Education

May 25, 2023

Chair Kitchens, Vice-Chair Dittrich, and members of the Assembly Committee on Education, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Assembly Bill 232, bipartisan legislation to ensure that our state's educational goals in K-12 public schools include instruction regarding Hmong Americans and Asian Americans.

As you may know, Wisconsin has the third-largest Hmong population in the United States and is home to over 200,000 Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders. They are leaders in our communities, many of whom have started successful businesses, served their communities on boards and as elected officials, and contributed immensely to the social and economic well-being of our state. The Hmong people also have a proud legacy of fighting alongside U.S. troops, as the Vietnam War spread to Laos. During the war, 30,000 Hmong soldiers aided U.S. forces in the fight against communism. They fought on the ground, flew combat missions, coordinated air strikes, rescued Americans caught behind enemy lines, and gathered intelligence on the movements of North Vietnamese troops.

The sacrifice of the Hmong people was critical to slowing the spread of communism; however, after the United States withdrew from Laos, many of those who fought alongside our troops faced horrific persecution from communist leaders. Forced to flee their homeland, the United States began accepting Hmong refugees in the 1970s, with California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin leading the way. In Central Wisconsin, we are thankful and proud to have significant Hmong populations in Stevens Point, Wausau, and Wisconsin Rapids. That's how I first became involved in coauthoring this legislation – learning more about the history of the Hmong people and feeling strongly that it must be recognized and taught within our public schools.

Covering the history, language, and worldviews of Hmong and Asian Americans and learning about their livelihoods and social experiences of in Wisconsin and the United States benefits not only our Hmong and Asian American students, but also the student population at large. When students engage with diverse ideas and populations, they expand their knowledge base and develop strong critical thinking skills, thus cultivating the capacity to navigate, engage, and contribute positively to their continually changing local, national, and global communities. Additionally, adequate and comprehensive instruction in this area may further engage Hmong and Asian American students, helping to mitigate low educational attainment rates and culture loss.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
**Katrina Shankland**

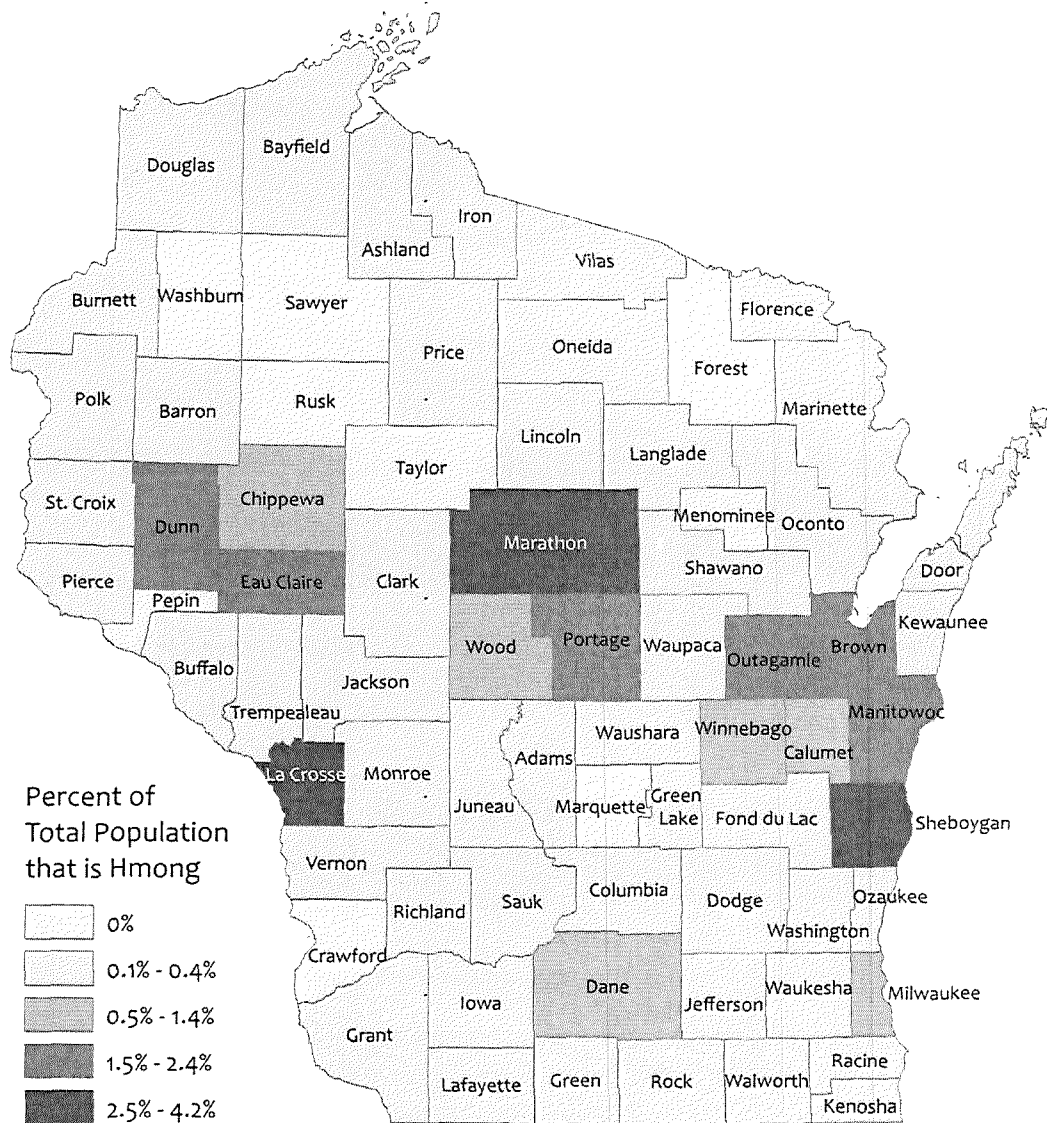
71<sup>st</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

We have all seen and experienced firsthand the value that Hmong Americans and Asian Americans bring to our state, but the reality is that for too long, their stories, experiences, and contributions have been overlooked and ignored. This legislation aims to correct that mistake by instructing school boards to include education about Hmong Americans and Asian Americans in K-12 public schools. Specifically, it would ensure that the Hmong and Asian American experience is always given adequate attention in our public schools by making a very simple change to state statute, amending our statutory educational goals under Ch.118 (2)c(8) to read "at all grade levels, an understanding of human relations, particularly with regard to American Indians, Black Americans, Hispanics, Hmong Americans, and Asian Americans."

This is a simple bill that will have a huge impact. To underscore its impact, a quote from Sheng Lee Riechers as covered by Wisconsin Public Radio: "I wish more people understood the history of why Hmong people are here and that Hmong people are truly American, if not more American than most Americans. They fought for the country, and they fought for freedom."

I am so thankful for the bipartisan support this bill has received and hope this is the year to finally get it across the finish line. Again, I want to thank the chairman for scheduling this hearing and everyone who has shown up today to speak in favor of this commonsense bill. At this time, I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

Map 3. Percent Hmong, Wisconsin Counties: 2010



Map 3 shows Hmong people as a percent of each county’s total population in 2010. Although Milwaukee County had the largest population of Hmong people, it had a lower percent of Hmong people among its total population.

Source: 2010 Census of Population and Housing, U.S. Census Bureau  
See Table 2 for map data



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## CORY TOMCZYK

STATE SENATOR • 29<sup>TH</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

Assembly Committee on Education  
Thursday, May 25, 2023

### Testimony – AB 232

Thank you for hearing AB 232.

Current law requires schools to include in their curriculum an understanding of human relations, particularly a few specific minority groups such as American Indians, Black Americans, and Hispanics. In order to get a well-rounded education, we have made a decision as a state that it is important to learn about these groups of people. Unfortunately, Hmong Americans and Asian Americans are not included. AB 232 adds these groups to the list.

This bill is important to my district because Central Wisconsin, specifically Wood, Marathon, and Portage Counties, are home to approximately 9,000 Hmong, with 6,000 in Marathon County alone. Wausau's population is 12% Hmong, making the city the highest per capita Hmong population in the entire United States.<sup>1</sup> My own business employs many Hmong employees. They are extremely hard working and family oriented.

The Hmong have an incredible story to tell. After helping the United States fight the North Vietnamese communists in the early 1960s, they were singled out by the Vietnamese and Laotian governments. As a result, over 10% of their population of 35,000 people were killed in 1975. Subsequently, as political refugees, half the Hmong in Laos escaped to Thailand then on to other countries. 50,000 of them came to Wisconsin. It is extremely important that students in Wisconsin schools learn about the Hmong community and what led to them settling in the United States and Wisconsin.

The Hmong have been embraced by Central Wisconsin and that will continue only through education. This is why AB 232 is so important – to ensure that every Wisconsin student learns about Hmong Americans and Asian Americans in the classroom. I encourage you to support it.

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<sup>1</sup> Hmong American Center – [www.hmongamericancenter.org](http://www.hmongamericancenter.org)



May 25, 2023

**Assembly Committee on Education  
Department of Public Instruction Testimony  
2023 Assembly Bill 232**

I want to thank Chairman Kitchens and members of the committee for the opportunity to give written testimony on Assembly Bill 99 (AB 99). My name is Kevyn Radcliffe, Legislative Liaison for the Department of Public Instruction (DPI).

**DPI is pleased to support AB 232.**

Current law, under Wis. Stat. sec. 118.01, establishes educational goals of the state. The statutes provide that effective operation of the public schools is dependent upon a common understanding of what public schools should be and do, and establishing such goals and expectations is a necessary and proper complement to the state's financial contribution to education. Each school board should provide curriculum, course requirements, and instruction consistent with the goals and expectations established under Wis. Stat. sec. 118.01 (2).

Among the expectations established around pupil citizenship is the provision under Wis. Stat. sec. 118.01 (2) (c) 7., which requires each school board to provide at all grade levels an instructional program designed to give pupils an appreciation and understanding of different value systems and cultures, along with an understanding of human relations. Further, under Wis. Stat. sec. 118.01 (2) (c) 8., each school board is required to provide at all grade levels an instructional program designed to give pupils an understanding of human relations, particularly regarding American Indians, Black Americans, and Hispanic Americans. State statutes are silent with respect to instruction on Hmong Americans and Asian Americans. This legislation will ensure that the unique history and experiences of Hmong Americans and all Asian Americans are included in the instruction provided to Wisconsin's public-school students.

DPI supports AB 232 and recommends full funding to implement the bill as well as funding for American Indians, Black Americans, and Hispanic Americans. The promise of Act 31 has never been fully realized due to lack of funding. School districts will incur added costs to provide professional learning and updating their curriculum with respect to meeting the requirements in AB 232. Since the bill does not provide funding, the costs associated with implementation would be absorbed by school districts, already facing budget shortfalls and teacher shortages.

DPI will notify school districts of the change in statutes and make the appropriate staff available for technical support. We will have additional responsibilities including providing guidance such as curating materials, identifying curriculum, and updating our website to add resources for school districts in complying with the requirements in the bill. DPI recommends giving us position

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authority for one (1) FTE to coordinate efforts under Act 31 to allow us to provide support to schools and teachers to implement AB 232.

If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact Kevyn Radcliffe, Legislative Liaison, at [Kevyn.radcliffe@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:Kevyn.radcliffe@dpi.wi.gov) or (608) 264-6716.



May 25, 2023

**Testimony to the Assembly Education Committee  
Assembly Bill 232  
Peggy Wirtz-Olsen, President  
Wisconsin Education Association Council**

I am Peggy Wirtz-Olsen, a teacher and president of the Wisconsin Education Association Council. I am here to support Assembly Bill 232 on behalf of our educator-members who cannot be here today because they are working in schools with their students.

Wisconsin educators support this legislation as a very simple change to state statute and a first step to be sure Asian Americans and Hmong Americans are always given the attention and inclusion they deserve in our public schools.

Along with educators, a large coalition of students, advocates and lawmakers have waited a long time for this bill to receive a hearing. We have a shared goal: That all children – without exception – know their story, the story of the people around them, and the story of Wisconsin.

Yesterday, I spent the day in a suburban Milwaukee elementary school with students, education support professionals and teachers. Our students are a beautiful collection of possibilities and hope, abilities and backgrounds, races and creeds. In a time when politics are increasingly inserted into how educators teach history and talk about race, it is refreshing that this bipartisan legislation brings communities together –instead of dividing us.

Asian American and Pacific Islander students and educators representing a wide array of different cultures, histories, and ethnicities say it's time for change. Wisconsin has the third-

Peggy Wirtz-Olsen, President  
Bob Baxter, Executive Director



largest population of Hmong Americans in America and the Asian American population has grown 82 percent since the 2000 Census. They will not remain invisible. Our state has made strides to recognize and respect other groups and must continue to move forward.

It's going to take years of professional development and determination to achieve change, even after this legislation is passed. Wisconsin public school educators will work hard to bring about the positive change this legislation invites. We ask the committee to provide leadership, too, and pass this bill onto the full Assembly for consideration.

Thank you.

Peggy Wirtz-Olsen, President  
Bob Baxter, Executive Director

To: Rep. Joel Kitchens, Committee Chair  
Members of the Assembly Committee on Education

From: Rabbi Bonnie Margulis, Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice  
Rev. Kerri Parker, Wisconsin Council of Churches  
Mr. Ahmed Quereshi, Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee  
Ms. Lisa Jones, MICAHA  
Mr. David Liners, WISDOM  
Mrs. Rachel Saladis, Wisconsin Conference, United Church of Christ  
Rabbi Steven Adams, Wisconsin Council of Rabbis

Date: May 25, 2023

RE: Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill #232

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As leaders and staff of six major interfaith organizations (Wisconsin Council of Churches, Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee, Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice, MICAHA and WISDOM, the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ, the Wisconsin Council of Rabbis) we write to thank you for consideration of Assembly Bill #232, the Hmong and Asian-American Instruction bill. We believe it is a bill that can go a long way toward building understanding.

All of our faith traditions value education. The Quran says "Whoever follows a path in pursuit of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise". The Torah tells us 'do not place a stumbling block before the blind.' A lack of education is a stumbling block to full participation in our society.

Wisconsin has one of the largest populations of Hmong-American people in the country, and the overall population of Asian and Asian-American people is growing rapidly. This bill will not only help students from those communities to know their own history, it will help all students gain a broader appreciation of the many cultures and people that contribute to our state and nation.

Our children are being prepared to live and work in a diverse, multicultural society and workforce. This bill is a step toward helping them to be better prepared for that future. And, of course, for our democracy to thrive it is necessary for us to understand our fellow citizens.

For these and many other reasons, we thank you for holding a hearing on AB 232. We encourage you to support it and to recommend it to your fellow legislators of both parties.

## Statement by Kabby Hong

Good morning members of the Education Committee. My name is Kabby Hong, and I'm the 2022 Wisconsin Teacher of the Year. For the last 20 years, I have been teaching at Verona Area High School in Verona, Wisconsin where I teach freshman English and AP Language and Composition. I am so proud to live in this great state and to be the first Asian American teacher to represent Wisconsin in the national teacher of the year program. I am here to offer my full support of Assembly Bill 232 that would require Asian American history to be taught in all Wisconsin schools.

States like Illinois, New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Florida have all passed bipartisan legislation similar to the Wisconsin bill to address the explosion of hate crimes against the AAPI community. From March 2020 to December 2021, there were more than 11,000 documented hate crimes against the Asian American community. We know that hate crimes are vastly underreported so the real number is much higher. This staggering statistic highlights the urgent need for visibility of the Asian American community as valued members of our community and vital contributors to our shared history.

In a recent survey of Americans, 58 percent of Americans could not name a single famous Asian American. Another startling statistic is that 33 percent of Americans believe that Asian Americans are MORE LOYAL to their country of origin than America. Our invisibility is directly tied to many people viewing Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners or people who are not real Americans.

The irony of this statistic is that if we taught AAPI history our students would learn about the 442nd combat regiment, the most decorated combat unit in U.S. military history with 21 medal of honor recipients. It was made up entirely of Japanese Americans who bravely fought in WWII for the United States even though many had families that were incarcerated in U.S. internment camps simply for having Japanese heritage.

Wisconsin has the third largest Hmong population in America. This community also has a deep history of service and sacrifice on behalf of this country with many who fought alongside America in the Vietnam War and had to relocate because of their allegiance to America. Chinese Americans literally built this country with their hands and often their lives as part of the transcontinental railroad expansion. Patsy Mink became the first woman of color in Congress and helped pass the landmark Title IX legislation that paved the way for women to thrive in all fields and professions today. If you have a daughter who loves to play sports or dreams of becoming a doctor, then you have Patsy Mink to thank for that.

I believe that our bonds as a country are stronger when ALL students learn about the 442nd, the bravery of the Hmong community, the perseverance of the Chinese Americans, and the leadership of Patsy Mink. Asian American history is American history. You can't tell the story of this great nation without the contributions of the AAPI community.

We are stronger as a state and as a nation when everyone is valued, seen and respected. AB 232 is more than an education bill. It's a firm declaration that Wisconsin embraces the AAPI community as an essential part of the fabric of this state. We are your neighbor, your doctor, your grocer, and even your teacher. Thank you so much.

Good Morning. I am Kaen Yang, a first generation Hmong-American and full time student attending Stevens Point Area Senior High. I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to testify in support of Assembly Bill 232. For as long as I can remember, I've been surrounded by my culture my entire life; but never once was I taught of its significance and our complex history with the United States. Until this past month, when I decided to choose two closely related research topics that revolved around the Hmong people. I've always known of the Secret War my people aided in, and the treacherous stories of elders risking the lives of their families to cross the viscous Mekong river in search of Asylum in Thailand. But I never recall being taught anything in the education system despite our massive efforts to aid the CIA during the Vietnam war. Living in the state of Wisconsin has truly blessed me by providing me with a community that has the third largest Hmong demographic in the United States of America. However, that being said, with our large demographic, students should be taught about our history. While researching the question: "What is the correlation between immigration and the loss of language" My findings deeply resonated with me. While I am no expert in this field, I am confident to say that in the process of Assimilation into American culture, language and cultural diversity was lost. From my own experience and many other immigrant children, we all yearned to look the same as our White counterparts. We wanted to bring "American" food as cold lunch in the fear of being judged for cultural foods. We wanted parents who understood English and American social norms in fear of being embarrassed and judged by those who we wanted to be so badly. Along the way, many of our younger generation, myself included, have lost proficiency in our native tongue; being embarrassed, or resentful to our culture and/or language was the direct effect of that. In that, I can confidently say that passing Assembly Bill 232 will better unite us as one. Representation is ever so important to show minority children that they matter. I cannot express the joy and sense of security I would have felt as a child to have a class, unit, or even lesson surrounding the history of my people. To see a great leader who looks like me being taught in history books would have provided me with great pride in my culture and race. After maturing, I have learned to respect my culture and history for what it is. No matter how unknown, or how minute, I've come to have confidence and pride in being Hmong. It warms my heart to see schools in my community celebrating AAPI month by giving Hmong students the opportunity to wear traditional clothing. As one of the largest marginalized ethnic groups in America, the Hmong deserve to have their history taught in school.

Introduction: Hello, my name is Rose, I am a junior in high school, and I'm from Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

I would like to acknowledge those who worked countless hours on making this historic moment possible and thank you all for being present and being able to listen.

Wisconsin has become a home to many Hmong Americans, the third largest Hmong population, including my parents and my family. Their stories and sacrifices should be heard and not forgotten, especially in history.

Many Hmong Americans came to the United States not knowing what to expect. To my knowledge and experience, my parents were raised differently and did not have the same education, opportunities, and experiences.

The last thing that they should worry about is their children facing racism in their schools. Unfortunately, racism and discrimination do exist in our schools and everywhere we go. However, We should be able to feel safe at school and express the background we come from in school. To spread awareness about this, this bill can benefit not only educate students but also teachers as well. This change will take time and hard work, but I believe that if we all work together to make this possible, it would brighten up Hmong students and they would feel like they belong.

Thank you for taking the time to hear many perspectives and being able to work with us.

Neema Mollel  
2100 W. Fairy Chasm Rd  
Milwaukee, WI 53217

Dear members of the Assembly committee on education,

My name is Neema Mollel and I am a current junior high school student at University School of Milwaukee. Today, I wanted to explain why teaching Asian American history is much more than just a curriculum change.

Teaching Asian American history would give Wisconsin students the opportunity to learn about the country they call home and therefore become better citizens of their communities. Asian American history is American history, and Asian Americans have been foundational in the creation of what we call America today. It would be a disservice to deny students the opportunity to learn more about people in their very communities, and foster empathy and understanding for just how each of us came to live in this beautiful state.

Looking beyond political divides, I hope that you all understand that by passing this bill, Wisconsin can become a state where students are educated on all aspects of American history and are better equipped to move "forward" (as is our state motto) and serve and interact in their communities with care and compassion. Thank you.



TO: Rep. Joel Kitchens, Chair and Members, Assembly Committee on Education

FROM: Andrea Bernstein, Associate Director, Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) Milwaukee Jewish Federation [[Andreab@MilwaukeeJewish.org](mailto:Andreab@MilwaukeeJewish.org)]

RE: Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 232

DATE: May 25, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Assembly Bill 232, directing School Boards to provide instruction about Hmong and Asian American communities. The Jewish Community supports this bipartisan proposal.

Education is a powerful tool to help students understand that human differences can be embraced, and to help fight discrimination and targeted harassment. By learning about each other, we strengthen our democracy.

It is vital that students learn about the unique history, culture, and contributions of the Hmong and other Asian American communities. The courage of Hmong soldiers' help in saving American soldiers, fighting behind enemy lines, and gathering counterintelligence in Vietnam is essential American and Wisconsin history. The Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) community contributes to the social, cultural, and economic thriving of Wisconsin, and we all benefit when these unique contributions are understood and celebrated.

The JCRC has formed an important partnership with AAPI community leaders and organizations through our AAPI-Jewish Alliance because both of our communities have seen a steep rise in anti-Asian hate and antisemitism in the past few years. We know that all forms of discrimination are connected, and we are committed to standing shoulder to shoulder to counter it together.

We thank the bill's authors, Representative Snyder and Senator Tomczyk and all the sponsors, including Representative Hong, for their leadership on this important issue. We are grateful for the opportunity to provide input on this legislation.

On behalf of the Jewish community, the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation urges the adoption of AB 232.

Thank you.



**Member Organizations**

- Americans for Peace Now
- Anshe Sfard Kehillat Torah
- Congregation Anshai Lebowitz
- Congregation Beth Israel Ner Tamid
- Congregation Beth Jehudah
- Congregation Emanu-El B'ne Jeshurun
- Congregation Emanu-El of Waukesha
- Congregation Shalom
- Congregation Shir Hadash
- Congregation Sinai
- Hadassah

- Harry & Rose Samson Family Jewish Community Center
- Hillel Milwaukee
- Jewish Family Services
- Jewish National Fund
- Jewish War Veterans
- Lake Park Synagogue
- Milwaukee Association of Russian Speaking Jews
- National Council of Jewish Women
- Tikkun Ha-Ir of Milwaukee
- Wisconsin Council of Rabbis

Thank you for the opportunity to share in this important moment in Jewish history. The Jewish Community Center of Milwaukee is proud to be a part of this historic event. We are grateful for the support of our members and the community at large. This is a moment of great significance for our people and for the world. We look forward to continuing our work together to build a better future for all.

The Jewish Community Center of Milwaukee is a proud member of the Jewish Community Federation of the Milwaukee Area. We are committed to providing a wide range of services and programs to our members and the community. Our goal is to create a vibrant and inclusive Jewish community that is open to all. We are proud to be a part of this historic event and to continue our work together to build a better future for all.

We thank the City of Milwaukee for its support of this historic event. We are grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this important moment in Jewish history. We look forward to continuing our work together to build a better future for all.

The Jewish Community Center of Milwaukee is proud to be a part of this historic event. We are grateful for the support of our members and the community at large. This is a moment of great significance for our people and for the world. We look forward to continuing our work together to build a better future for all.



Rayyang Gorman  
9400 N. Fairway Dr  
Bayside, WI 53217

Dear members of the Assembly Committee on Education,

My name is Rayyang Gorman. I am a 13-year-old 7<sup>th</sup> grade student. Whenever I ask my peers about some of the big events that happened in Asian American history in this country, such as the Japanese American Incarceration during WWII or the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, none of my peers has heard anything about it.

In schools, we learn a lot about American history, Native American history, African American and Hispanic history. If I want to know anything about Asian American history, I have to ask my family, or Google it. Today, I can also ask ChatGPT. ChatGPT tells me things that schools have not. That's not right!

My peers and I deserve to know the whole American history and that includes Asian American history. It is our right to have access to the whole picture, not a partial picture of America. Therefore, it is critically important to pass Assembly Bill 232 so everyone can have the opportunity to learn about Asian American and Hmong American history.

Please vote in favor of the bill! Thank you!

Haiyun Lu  
2100 W. Fairy Chasm Rd  
Milwaukee, WI 53217  
Email: [hlu@usm.org](mailto:hlu@usm.org)

Dear Members of the Assembly education committee,

My name is Haiyun Lu. I am a Mandarin teacher and Capstone Project co-director at University School of Milwaukee. I am also the director at Ignite Chinese and a co-director of Comprehensible Midwest.

Asian American students face the weight of stereotypes every day. They are often labeled as "the smart ones" or "the quiet ones" simply because of their Asian heritage. These stereotypes seem harmless, but they carry an impact that the students can't ignore. Because they are being reduced to a single trait, it is as if their identities are being flattened into a narrow box.

These students, just like everyone else, have unique passions, talents, and dreams that deserve to be seen and celebrated. They long for their classmates to see them as individuals, to understand that Asian Americans are not a monolithic group, but a diverse community with rich histories and cultures.

Learning Asian American history helps to break stereotypes. It also helps the entire school community become more inclusive and appreciative of the diversity within their own classrooms. Students develop empathy and respect for one another, fostering an environment where everyone feels valued and seen.

This is the world we want all of our children to live in. These are the feelings we want all of our children to have.

I implore you to vote YES on Assembly Bill 232. Thank you.

May 23, 2023  
Angela Wang  
5812 N Bay Ridge Ave  
Milwaukee, WI, 53217

Dear Members of the Assembly Committee on Education,

My name is Angela Wang from the University School of Milwaukee. I am testifying today for Assembly Bill 232 as it strongly resonates with my identity and culture as a Chinese American. You may be wondering why, as a student at a private school, why I would be concerned with education at public schools. But as a former student in a public elementary and middle school, I have experienced the lack of or even nonexistent education on Asian American history. Given the recent uptick in violence against Asian Americans and in celebration of Asian American History Month, I believe this bill is particularly appropriate.

At USM, we already have seen a significant increase in Asian American history being taught in classrooms. I have enjoyed the results of this difference between my experience at USM and at public schools. I have experienced less hatred and more understanding of my culture. To me, this shows how a requirement for Asian American education would be extremely beneficial for my peers in public schools.

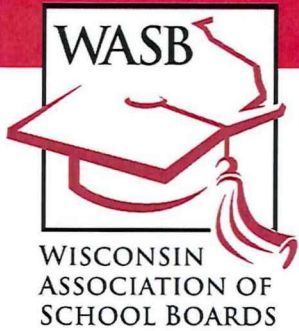
This also explains that in a place where it lacks understanding of Asian American history, why hatreds, discrimination and racism occur. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a dramatic surge of anti-Asian American hate crimes, instilling fear within our community. Our Asian elders were defenseless and vulnerable to those shoves, those spits, those hate-filled speeches of "go back to where you came from." I vividly remember my family, frantic and afraid. My grandparents live with my family, and we constantly checked up on them. We wanted to protect them, to make sure this never happened to them. The main reason for these attacks was that people lacked opportunity to learn and get to know people who look like me. Anyone who looked like me was accused of carrying "Kung-flu". How is that possible? These people who had attacked us had not been educated about us, about our history, about our innocence. These hate-filled events would have not happened if these people had been educated about us.

The opportunity to give us a safe place to live and thrive is in your hands. The very opportunity to create a loving and harmonious community for all of us living in is also in your hands.

Please pass the Assembly Bill 232!

Thank you!

Angela Wang



122 W. WASHINGTON AVENUE, MADISON, WI 53703  
PHONE: 608-257-2622 • TOLL-FREE: 877-705-4422  
FAX: 608-257-8386 • WEBSITE: WWW.WASB.ORG

JOHN H. ASHLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TO: Members, Assembly Committee on Education  
FROM: Dan Rossmiller, WASB Government Relations Director  
DATE: May 25, 2023  
RE: COMMENTS ON ASSEMBLY BILL 232, relating to: directing school boards to provide instruction on Hmong Americans and Asian Americans.

The Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) is a voluntary membership association representing all 421 of Wisconsin's public school boards.

While the WASB generally opposes curricular mandates that come without funding and has strong concerns about the lack of funding for the mandate in this bill, we also support students learning about Hmong American/Asian American/Pacific Islander history and culture.

We would be happy to collaborate with lawmakers on addressing funding for the development of an appropriate model curriculum and training package as called for in the WASB resolution cited below so that this legislation will not result in an unfunded mandate on school districts and can be implemented with fidelity.

A 2022 resolution adopted by school board member delegates to the WASB Delegate Assembly expresses support for teaching about Asian-Americans but raises appropriate concerns about the costs of developing such curriculum:

“The WASB encourages Wisconsin public schools to develop an educational curriculum and professional training to teach the history, culture, and contributions of Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders to the economic, culture, and social development of Wisconsin and USA. The WASB also requests the state Legislature provide sufficient funding to develop an appropriate model curriculum and training package.”

This resolution was offered in the belief that developing and implementing such as curriculum might help to build greater understanding of Hmong American and Asian-American economic, cultural, and other contributions to our state and nation. It was hoped that this in turn might have the benefit of reducing violence or threats of violence against Hmong Americans and Asian Americans and helping to engender a sense of well-being among Hmong American and other Asian-American students as they feel more a part of Wisconsin's rich social fabric.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Testimony by:

Dr. Maysee Herr

W141N10568 Wooded Hills Drive, Germantown, WI 53022

I am providing my testimony today in support of Assembly Bill 232 that would expand inclusion of Hmong Americans and Asian Americans in Public School Curriculum. I am a 1.5 generation Hmong American woman who arrived in the United States with my family in 1976 from a Thai refugee camp. My father, uncles, and other family members served in the Secret War where Hmong were recruited to fight as allies alongside and to protect American soldiers during the Vietnam War. This fact alone should be enough to have earned the respect and honor of Americans and yet, what I frequently witnessed and experienced growing up as a young child and teenager in Central Wisconsin was far from respect and honor from my predominantly White neighbors. Until this day, I have vivid memories of feeling anger and confusion as White community members would drive by our house in Wausau, throwing several eggs at a time at our window. Every time, my parents and I would go outside after we thought it was safe to do so to clean up the egg yolk. Often times, we'd have to wait until the morning to clean up because the incident would happen late in the evening and we couldn't see well enough to clean the egg yolk. Sometimes, we would have to clean the window a few times a week. Do you know how hard it is to clean egg yolk, especially several hours of having to wait? In each stroke of cleaning, the hate towards us was felt in our bodies. Why, why would someone do this to someone else, especially if they've helped save their people?

As a teenager, its incidents like these that made me question, why can't schools just teach about why the Hmong are in the U.S.? Aren't we a part of U.S. history? Another one of my clear memories was seeing that there was only a short paragraph at the end of the history books about the Hmong and rarely did we ever get to discuss (forget studying about) the information in that part of the textbooks.

And then, one day, I experienced something that stayed with me even more and that led me to the teaching profession. There was an argument in one of my history classes; several White students questioned "Why are so many Hmong people on welfare and yet drive nice cars?" Many other similar questions followed. I attempted to speak up but had a hard time doing so. I couldn't even breathe. I looked at my White teacher to "save" me and my Hmong peers from what felt like an attack and much ignorance from my White peers, only for the teacher to say, merely nothing except, "The conversation seems to be getting heated. Let's move on." He saw that I was clearly upset and yet, never addressed the questions from either side nor console me in any way. He had failed me. It was that moment that I realized even experienced, veteran teachers didn't have the knowledge of Hmong history and its people enough to teach about it so how could I expect him to have "saved me"? I would later go on to school to become a classroom teacher and then 10 years as a teacher educator at the university, just so I could do my part in educating students and future teachers about the diversity of students and those in the community. But I could not and cannot, and should not have to do it alone. It is the responsibility of all teachers and the community.

I'm deeply saddened and disappointed that over 30 years have passed since the experiences I described earlier and little has changed in Wisconsin to mandate the teaching about Hmong and Asian American

history and culture in Wisconsin in systemically impactful ways. This is cause for great concern evident in several recent incidents that have happened in the Wausau School District and DC Everest School Districts where racial ignorance and discrimination have been experienced by Asian students by a non-Asian teacher and students. Even administrators are unprepared to know how to deal with these situations when they arise. So, not only does the curriculum need to be taught but our educators need to be trained on Hmong and Asian history so that they could teach the content appropriately.

I strongly ask all of you today to approve Assembly Bill 232 so that together, we can all truly live as Americans, visible to one another and able to move beyond simply tolerating each other's existence, to understanding and respecting each other's existence as human beings; so that we're not afraid or ashamed to be different from one another. It's our diversity that ultimately makes us a great nation and great state.

Hello,

I am writing on behalf of the Social Studies Department at Verona Area High School in support of Senate Bill 240. As social studies teachers, we witness firsthand how students are empowered when given the opportunity to see themselves and their histories in the curriculum. Asian American and Pacific Islander students in Wisconsin deserve this opportunity for empowerment.

AAPI history is American history and its inclusion in Wisconsin curriculum should be mandated by law just as the histories of other diverse groups in the U.S. have been mandated. Members of the AAPI community have played a vital role in the shaping of our great state and nation. We believe it is imperative that all of our students learn about the rich history, contributions, and experiences of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in our communities.

We urge you to vote in support of passing Senate Bill 240.

Sara Asendorf  
Jeff Behringer  
Julie Berndt  
Kennedy Crever  
Sarah Domres  
Jennifer Glassford  
Dan Holzuter  
Kara Johnson  
Shane Kieffer  
Chris Little  
Andrew Larson  
Cassie Mentzer  
Denise Quinn  
A.J. Simonini

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Sara Asendorf  
Social Studies  
Verona Area High School  
[Landing Page](#)

33593 Star Route Road  
Bayfield, WI 54814

May 23, 2023

Dear Representative Joel Kitchens and Senator John Jagler,

My name is Maij Xyooj. I am a Hmong educator-librarian-scholar. I currently work at Cia Siab, Inc in La Crosse, WI as the Community Resource Advocate. I am also pursuing my doctoral degree in First Nations Education at UW-Green Bay.

I am writing this testimony to urge you to support AB232 into law. Hate violence against Hmong people happens in WI more than in MN and CA. Simply put, WI is a hostile state for Hmong folks ([Study & Struggle, 2022](#)). One way to make WI a more welcoming, safer place for Hmong folks is to start with our educational institutions. Currently, there is a lack of representation on Hmong people in our K-12 curricula. Moreover, there is a lack of literacy of non-Hmong people to interact with Hmong people. This bill, if passed into law, does more than benefit Hmong people. It benefits all of us as a community. We all are products of our environment; if you desire to see healthy communities that practice respect, duty, and responsibility to one another, you have to foster that environment. Act 31, with the amendment of AB232, enables us as a community to build healthier communities based on respect and understanding of our human differences.

Thank you in advance for doing all that you can to encourage your colleagues in the legislature to support AB232.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Maij Xyooj', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Maij Xyooj, MA, MLIS



**From:** Alex Bear <[alexandria.bear@gmail.com](mailto:alexandria.bear@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Saturday, May 20, 2023 10:51 AM  
**To:** Rep.Kitchens <[Rep.Kitchens@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:Rep.Kitchens@legis.wisconsin.gov)>; Delaporte, Bob  
<[Bob.Delaporte@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:Bob.Delaporte@legis.wisconsin.gov)>  
**Subject:** Assembly Bill 232

Good morning Representative Kitchens,

My name is Alex Bear- I am a single mother and a physician residing in Whitefish Bay, WI. My daughter Hannah is 5 years old and is currently enrolled in the Whitefish Bay public school system. She was adopted from China at 2 years of age in November of 2019. I am writing in support of Assembly Bill 232. There are a number of potential benefits in passing this bill, for Hannah, the general public, and the healthcare system, which I will outline below.

Hannah and I returned from China a few months prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the spread of the virus was beginning, but prior to the shutdown, we attended a gathering where we were asked if Hannah was the one who brought the virus from China. This incident is one of many examples of the rampant anti-Asian sentiment that has grown in the past years. These sentiments stem from ignorance of the rich history and culture of the Eastern world. Enhancing education in the school system will provide a foundation of knowledge and understanding of the culture and values that come from the Asian world.

International adoptions from China have been long-standing since the enactment of the one child policy. Although the policy is now defunct, the culture of the policy is still present in parts of China. Education for American adoptive parents of Chinese-born children has improved significantly over the past decades, and has trended towards support of maintenance of Chinese cultural traditions. This is challenging given the lack of education in the public school system on Chinese history, traditions, and culture. I personally have sought out my own education in these arenas in an effort to support my child's cultural heritage. We can (and should) do better by promoting AAPI education within the school systems.

Lastly, I work as a hospice and palliative medicine provider at the Medical College of Wisconsin, caring for some of the sickest patients at Froedtert Hospital as they approach the end of their lives. We have a significant cohort of Hmong patients, for whom we (healthcare providers) lack an understanding of their end of life customs and traditions, which is representative of a greater lack of understanding of the history of the Hmong people. While we can employ cultural curiosity in these encounters, we can do much better for our patients with education that could provide a modicum of cultural competence.

AAPI and Hmong history is rich, valuable, and more than worthy of a place in our public education curriculum. I would argue it is a necessity and a significant omission in curriculum development thus far. There is so much potential for benefit to current and future generations of students. I urge you to pass this bill.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Alex Bear  
414-350-4270

Dear Mr. Kitchens,

My name is Haiyun Lu, I'm writing to strongly urge you to vote for Assembly Bill 232 and Senate Bill 240 that requires schools in Wisconsin to include Asian American and Hmong American history in the curriculum.

Teaching Asian American history in our educational curriculum is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it provides a more comprehensive understanding of American society by including the experiences and contributions of Asian Americans. Secondly, it promotes inclusivity and empowers students from Asian American backgrounds, enhancing their sense of identity and well-being. Additionally, it cultivates empathy, cultural sensitivity, and global citizenship among all students. Furthermore, it challenges stereotypes, combats prejudice, and promotes social justice by examining historical discrimination. Lastly, it enriches the overall educational experience, fostering critical thinking and a broader perspective. Incorporating Asian American history is vital for creating an inclusive, empathetic, and knowledgeable society.

As a member of Milwaukee Turners, Wisconsin Chinese Chamber of Commerce, OCA – Wisconsin Chapter, JACL – Wisconsin Chapter, Asian Coalition, and a teacher at the University School of Milwaukee, I'm supported by many of my friends as an advocate for Senate Bill 240 and Assembly Bill 232. I sincerely hope you will vote in favor of this bill as well.

Yours sincerely,

Haiyun Lu

Haiyun Lu  
Ignite Chinese Director  
Comprehensible Midwest Co-director  
Capstone Co-director & Mandarin Teacher  
University School of Milwaukee



## Sikh Religious Society of Wisconsin

dba Gurduara Brookfield

3675 N Calhoun Road, Brookfield, WI 53005



05/22/2023

To The Wisconsin State Assembly

The Sikh Religious Society of Wisconsin, Brookfield WI is a registered NON-PROFIT religious organization in the state of Wisconsin. Sikhs immigrated to the United States from Punjab, India and Sikhs living in Wisconsin identify as a part of the Asian American Pacific Islander Coalition of Wisconsin.

We are writing this letter in support of Assembly Bill 232 to include Hmong Americans and Asian American culture in the public school curriculum of the state of Wisconsin. Immigrants from all over the Globe make the fabric of American society vibrant and diverse. It is the state's duty to expose young minds to this diversity and foster a better understanding of American Asian culture. We support this initiative to add Asian American culture in the public school curriculum. We also hope that, by extension of Bill 232, the state assembly will consider introducing the history of other Asian immigrant cultures in the US, including the Sikhs.

Our congregation has been based out of Brookfield, WI location for the past 25 plus years. Over this course of time we have hosted representatives from local schools, colleges and local churches to impart awareness about Sikhism, and we will continue to do so. We have seen many benefits that come from sharing our history and culture with others, harmony and understanding being the main one. Therefore we support Assembly Bill 232 so that the state can also take positive steps to raise awareness and support diverse citizens.

Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Anup Singh  
Secretary, Executive Committee  
414.477.6392



23 May 2023

RE: Assembly Bill 232

To the Wisconsin State Assembly Committee on Education:

Beginning in 1975, the United States began accepting refugees from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia following the fall of Saigon and the end of the Vietnam War. Nearly 50 years later, many, having spent over half their lives here, call themselves Americans. They, and their children, have enmeshed themselves in the American fabric, joining other Asian groups and other migrants who have come to call the United States home. The state of Wisconsin embodies this growing diversity. According to the Wisconsin Department of Health, the Asian population in Wisconsin has grown 21.6% since the 2000 Census and is the fastest-growing major racial or ethnic group in the United States. Unfortunately, based on global events, racial reckoning, and politics, anti-Asian hate crimes have also increased, quadrupled, in America's largest cities since 2021, according to an analysis from the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino. So, while there is a growing Asian community in Wisconsin there is also a disconnect of a greater cultural understanding in the US. The Lao Community Center of Wisconsin (LCCW) applauds The Wisconsin State Assembly Committee on Education for intentionally bridging the gap to create a more inclusive community. We thank you for scheduling a public hearing for Assembly Bill 232 which would expand education of Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) and Hmong American history in public schools.

The LCCW recognizes the need for AAPI and Hmong American history to be taught in our K-12 schools. Our refugee and immigrant stories are a part of the American story. Wisconsin citizens may wonder every Memorial Day & Veterans Day why Hmong & Lao veterans march in these parades. It is because of their contributions during the Secret War in Laos, where these people were recruited by the CIA to fight a proxy war on behalf of the United States. The actors in, and motivations for, this war have come to light in recent years, but the general public is still unaware of the contributions of their neighbors. This has led to misunderstandings, and sadly, discrimination and violence against vulnerable Lao, Hmong, Cambodian, and Vietnamese refugees and their families.

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and anti-Asian violence, the LCCW was formed. One of our aims is to make visible our community to the larger Wisconsin community through various cultural and educational events. While we continue to engage with our neighbors, we know that we cannot do this work alone. Our education system bears the



responsibility of providing students with an understanding of the multicultural society in which they reside. The absence of AAPI and Hmong history from our curriculums is partly the reason for the lack of understanding of AAPI communities, the continued perpetuation of the model minority myth, and the anti-Asian sentiment that has been embedded in the American consciousness throughout our history.

Today, the LCCW joins other AAPI communities and our allies in supporting the inclusion of AAPI and Hmong history in our K-12 curriculums throughout the state of Wisconsin. We call for visibility, understanding, and inclusion not only for us today, but for those whose stories have been lost or pushed to the margins of history. Again, we thank this committee for their time and consideration. We believe in the role of education in making present certain groups and building a more inclusive society and strongly support the passing of Assembly Bill 232.

Respectfully,

Lao Community Center of Wisconsin (LCCW)

23 May 23, 2023

RE: Assembly Bill 232

To the Wisconsin State Assembly Committee on Education:

Greetings to the Committee on Education. Thank you for taking the time to read my written testimony in support of Assembly Bill 232. My name is Akarath Soukhaphon and I am currently a PhD student at UW-Madison, hoping to graduate in May 2024. I like to tell people I'm doing the Wisconsin tour of schools, spending time in Milwaukee and West Allis schools up until the 8th grade, then moving on to high school in Mount Calvary, WI, completing my undergrad in Whitewater, my master's in Milwaukee, and finally working on my PhD in Madison. It has been a long journey and I would not have gotten this far without the support of my family, teachers, and community. Wisconsin is where I intend to set down roots and raise a family. Wisconsin is home and though I embrace this place, I have not always felt welcomed. I know this to be true for many Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities as well, regardless of their generations-long time spent in, their contributions to, and their sacrifices for, this country.

My family arrived in the United States, to Milwaukee, WI, in the winter of 1979 as refugees from Laos. They were fortunate to have had kind sponsors and other Lao refugees to lean on for support. My mother spoke some English, having worked for the United States Agency for International Development in the waning years of the Laotian Civil War, a proxy war of the larger, more visible Vietnam War. Since arriving, my parents worked and raised their family and helped other Lao families to do the same. They left their families and sacrificed any future in Laos to begin anew in a foreign land.

I was born and raised here. The United States is the only home I have ever known—the only home that millions of other AAPI people have known—and yet, we have not always felt as though we belong. For most of my time in school, I was the only Asian student, an enigma—present, but unknowable to my classmates and many teachers. My name was mispronounced, misspelled, and mocked. Few people ever cared to correct their errors and fewer still cared enough to dispel their prejudices to learn about how I came to share in the story of this country.

I've seen, read, and taught from US history textbooks that mention the Chinese rail workers and the Japanese internment during World War II. However, these stories have received so little attention, maybe a few paragraphs and certainly, never a full chapter that would warrant anything more than one test question. Part of the problem is that teachers are not equipped to teach AAPI histories because they, themselves, may not have had adequate instruction on these histories. This lack of representation in our history curriculums has placed the burden of explaining our history and justifying our presence on individuals (often young students) who may have only limited knowledge and experiences of their histories. This can be simply annoying to overwhelmingly stressful. While some, like me, have turned this burden into an academic and personal pursuit, the constant lack of representation and misrepresentation is detrimental to our

society as a whole. When people remain at the margins, despite being in and contributing to all facets of society, they easily become targets of discrimination and violence. We have seen this manifest in the recent rise in anti-Asian violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, a violence that has a long and silenced past in this country. It is time to bring these histories to light and encourage our students to engage with them in constructive ways.

As a former student and educator in K-12 schools, I know that Asian faces are few, easily overlooked, and can be taken for granted. In school, I always enjoyed history class but was disappointed at the absence of AAPI contributions and histories, and remain disappointed until this day. History legitimizes presence. The absence of AAPI histories from our school curriculum sends a message that certain groups are unworthy of mention or their contributions are insignificant. We know that AAPI people are neither unworthy nor insignificant and neither are our histories. Students deserve and should be given a complete picture, however complex, multi-faceted, or, at times, uncomfortable. We owe them the fullness of history.

I am hopeful that this committee will see the merit of including AAPI and Hmong history in our school curriculums. I believe in our teachers whose efforts often go unrecognized. I, and I'm sure others from different AAPI and Hmong communities, am willing to support our teachers in creating curriculums that can be delivered to students in age-appropriate and digestible ways. I have faith in our students' openness to learning more about the diversity around them—in their own classrooms, neighborhoods, and cities. Lao, Hmong, Cambodian, and Vietnamese people have been in the United States for nearly 50 years. Other AAPI groups have been here for generations longer. New migrants from Myanmar have arrived more recently and others will continue to come and call the United States, and Wisconsin, home. Now is the time to take seriously this call to include AAPI and Hmong history in our schools—to curb and eliminate the misconceptions about our communities that have led to violence against our communities and to make present those students whose (his)stories have been absent for far too long from our history books.

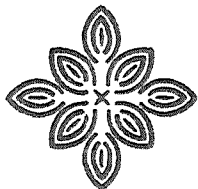
My name is Pong Xiong. I work as the Youth Advocate at Cia Siab, Inc. based in La Crosse, Wisconsin. The Hmong youth in our communities face struggles everyday, ranging from racism and stereotyping, to loss of identity and culture, or emotional and psychological tolls. Performative action is a time of the past... we must do better to provide a better future for our Hmong youth, starting with the foundation, that of which is their culture, identity, and history. We then need to address the racism and stereotypes that the Hmong youth continuously face. It is not enough to be just non-racist. For the sake of all Hmong youth and all youth of color, we must be anti-racist.

I've spent many times at school wondering why I am not taught my history and culture, am I not a person? Have my ancestors not suffered enough to be given veteran benefits or recognition? We must do better. Young Hmong people need a strong foundation to grow and improve our society. We believe that schools are already important, we send our kids 180 days out of the year, 5 days a week, 8 hours a day. We have so much time to uplift, empower, and educate our Hmong youth about their history within these 8 hours each day, 5 days a week, and 180 days a year. This goes without saying of course, peers and teachers that are not Hmong should also be educated to tackle issues of racism, prejudice, and stereotypes.

AB 232 will allow the Hmong youth in our communities to love themselves better. When one loves themselves, they become resilient. Resilient, young Hmong people are able to combat injustices and create healthier communities and create a better society. Thank you.

--

Pong Xiong  
(He/Him/Tub/Nus/Kwv)  
Youth Advocate



**Cia Siab, Inc.**

1825 Sunset Lane, La Crosse WI 54601

608-615-7117

24/7 WI Hmong Family Strengthening Helpline **(877) 740-4292**

[www.ciasiabinc.org/](http://www.ciasiabinc.org/)

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**Building a Culturally Vibrant Hmoob Community**

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Good Afternoon,

I, LawFu Yang, work as the Youth Advocate at Cia Siab, Inc. Our Hmong youth face racism everyday. They face general stereotypes from school everyday. Stereotypes emerge from our society which means that it is our culture, our society that is teaching our kids these stereotypes about Hmong and Asian Americans.

The everyday school racism takes both an emotional and psychological toll on our youth. Facing racism everyday at school – if you are bullied everyday at school, imagine your mental state at the end of 14 years of schooling.

I have been working with Hmong youth for 5 years. The youth I work with face a loss of representation. Without representation youth face a loss of identity, loss of language, and confidence in who they are as Hmong people. It is essential for young Hmong people's growth to have the opportunity to learn about who they are. The contents of Hmong history is not meant to revolve solely around the "Vietnam War". I graduated from High School, Class of 2017, and yet, the Hmong youth that I work with are facing the same hardships, discrimination, and loss of representation as I did when I was in High School.

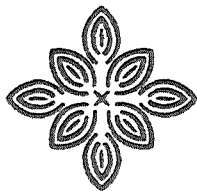
It is a lifelong practice that young Hmong people need to explore a part of themselves at an early age in order to grow. To know and feel good about themselves that there is space to learn about themselves and where the content is culturally specific.

I am 24 years old, I feel my generation will never get to experience what it is like to learn about my culture, my practices, and who I am as a Hmong person. However, I know that AB 232 will create opportunities for Hmong youth to learn and create change so they can build a culturally vibrant community that represents them and the generations to come.

-LawFu Yang

--

LawFu Yang  
He/Him/His  
Youth Advocate



**Cia Siab, Inc.**

1825 Sunset Lane, La Crosse WI 54601  
24/7 WI Hmong Family Strengthening Helpline **(877) 740-4292**  
<https://www.ciasiabinc.org/>

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## **May 25, 2023 Public Hearing Testimony for AB 232**

### **E Her Vang on Behalf of the AAPI Coalition of Wisconsin**

Thank you to the Wisconsin Assembly Education Committee and Chairman Joel Kitchens for granting a public hearing today around this important bill.

My name is E Her Vang and I'm a proud second generation Hmong American who grew up and still reside in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. However, I wasn't always proud to be Hmong American. When I was in the third grade, I attended a Milwaukee Public School that really celebrated diversity. One of my favorite things about school was that my cousins and brothers, who were also Hmong, attended the same school as me. One time, I remember so distinctively, my cousin and I were speaking in Hmong about our weekend and a teacher overheard us and said very bluntly, "It's very rude to speak in another language that is not English especially if others do not understand". At this moment and moving forward we never spoke Hmong out loud in class or around school and especially around this teacher. In sixth grade, I transferred out to the Franklin Public School district where it was predominantly white and I became highly skilled in assimilating and code switching between my school and home life. This marks the beginning of the isolation and loss of my own identity that I struggle with throughout higher education. Fast forward to after graduate school, I moved to Jacksonville, Florida to serve in a middle school classroom as a success mentor. If you're not familiar with Duval County Public Schools their student demographics are similar to Milwaukee—predominantly Black however low to no Hmong or Asian American students. I worked in a sixth grade Math classroom supporting those who were furthest from being on track. The first few weeks of school so many students including my own sixth graders kept calling me the Chinese tutor. At first, I was bothered by it but took a step back and reflected on why they may call me Chinese vs Hmong. They simply didn't know what Hmong was and never met someone Hmong. This led me to create a quick 10-minute presentation that I titled "Who are the Hmong?" which included our journey to America, our foods, traditions, clothing and more. The students were curious and asked me a lot of questions but I didn't think much of it because we went back to learning about long division and PEMDAS. The following year I had the privilege to come back as a manager at the same school and the new sixth graders started calling me the Chinese tutor again. Just as I was planning to do my 10 min presentation again, the students I tutored who are now 7<sup>th</sup> graders stood up for me, corrected them and told them "She is not Chinese, she is Hmong!" I've never felt so seen and connected.

I share these two experiences because supporting this bill to pass would not only benefit Hmong and Asian American students but all teachers, faculty and students who may not know about the Hmong and Asian American experience in Wisconsin and the U.S. Wisconsin is the state with the third largest Hmong population but unlike the top two states with large Hmong/Asian American communities; California and Minnesota, we are not in one congregated area like the Twin Cities or Sacramento. We are in Milwaukee, Madison, Wausau, Fox Cities, La Crosse, Eau Claire and many more cities

throughout the state. This causes Hmong and Asian American students to feel isolated seeking their identities, and a sense of connection and belonging at school.

Research has shown that there is a positive correlation to when a student feels connection and belonging to schools that their attendance, engagement, behavior and academics improve. If we are a state that is committed to closing the achievement gap between White and Black students, we must have that conversation about White and Southeast Asian students because the gap is just as wide when we disaggregate the Asian student population. In a 2017 report released by the US Census Bureau while 86 percent of Asian Americans have completed a high school education—slightly above the national average of 85 percent—Southeast Asian Americans have significantly lower rates. For example, Hmong Americans at a 61 percent with high school completion.

Wisconsin has an opportunity and responsibility to provide a more inclusive school environment for all students, their parents and the staff. I thank all representatives who have co-authored and are in support of this bill and urge the rest of you to not let Wisconsin fall behind when it comes to educating and celebrating all our students. Thank you for reading my testimony.

E Her Vang, AAPI Coalition of Wisconsin Education Committee Member

This is my written testimony and as a Wisconsin state resident and voter that Assembly Bill 232 - "An Act to amend 118.01 (2) (c) 8. of the statutes; Relating to: directing school boards to provide instruction on Hmong Americans and Asian Americans." be passed.

I am from the Milwaukee metropolitan area, a resident of Muskego, Wisconsin. I am also a proud member of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin. My uncle, Alan Caldwell, helped create Wisconsin's Act 31 in 1989. That legislation forwarded educational requirements for Native American educational experiences for our public school students to learn about our culture, history, sovereignty and Ojibway treaty rights. I have seen the benefits for teachers, staff, school boards and communities that take the act seriously. The act has created many opportunities for students to learn about Native Americans and our contributions to the development of our country and state. This awareness, and knowledge becoming common, helps seal the bonds of citizenship and togetherness.

What is not known by most, is that contained in Wisconsin's Act 31, are requirements for Hispanic and African American subjects to be taught, just as Native Americans. There are populations that have been left out and left behind. Our state, is worse for the exclusion of our Asian, Asian Pacific people, as well as those of Pacific Islander ancestry. Every citizen should have trust in a government that will allow for opportunity, safety and justice. With rising hate crimes towards our neighbors, the answers must come from our individual neighborhoods, towns, cities and counties.

But how can we address this as individuals, because as a group, we are almost wholly ignorant of what our neighbors are going through, Hate crimes have risen, chances for raising awareness for what is going on languish for the invisibility of what is happening.

We need chances to celebrate our diverse society, but how can we without awareness? If our schools can help, then we have a moral obligation to do it. You have a chance to do it, and I support you in passing AB 232.

A multicultural society means diverse populations must be represented in our classrooms. It is unfortunate that many of our best teaching must be mandated, and today is the day we must give education a chance to address the many unseen gifts our Asian, Asian American and those with Pacific Islander ancestry. Again, forward the work that must be done because it has been done for so many others. Exclusion is not our way, it should not be your way.

Vote for AB 232

Marin Webster Denning  
S68W18984 Derby Court  
Muskego, WI 53150

My name is Kaelee Heideman, and I am an elementary school counselor in Oshkosh and a 2023 Wisconsin State Teacher of the Year. Although I am unable to attend the public hearing in person, I am writing to respectfully submit the following testimony in support of Assembly Bill 232 relating to directing school boards to provide instruction on Hmong Americans and Asian Americans.

Including Hmong American and Asian American history in schools will only benefit our students. Our Hmong American and Asian American students deserve to be represented as they learn about our nation's and state's history. Students from different cultural backgrounds deserve to have windows into other cultures and the contributions Hmong Americans and Asian Americans have made. If we don't allow access to these parts of history, we continue to spread bias and discrimination.

Last spring we experienced an incident at my school in which a white student made discriminatory comments to a classmate who is Asian American. At the elementary school level we spend a great deal of time reteaching when hurtful comments are made, but I cannot help but wonder how this incident may have been avoided had my students had access to a curriculum that celebrated the history of Hmong Americans and Asian Americans. Instead, the family of the Asian American student chose to take their own time to present to our entire school on Asian American and Pacific Islander history. While this was an incredible opportunity for my staff and students, the burden to educate our students should not rest solely on the shoulders of the families who experience racism and discrimination every single day. We need to include Hmong Americans and Asian Americans in our curriculum.

Including Hmong Americans and Asian Americans, adding five words to the current statute, will provide mirrors and windows for our students to learn about themselves and people from backgrounds different from themselves. This is what is best for our kids because it will allow schools to be more proactive in preventing bias incidents, rather than forcing schools to scramble to respond after an incident has already occurred. Our children deserve to be represented in the curriculum that is taught in our schools. I urge you to direct school boards to provide instruction on Hmong Americans and Asian Americans.

May 23, 2023  
Xiaoying Lin  
Math Instructor  
Gateway Technical College  
1001 S. Main Street  
Racine WI 53403

Dear members of the Assembly Committee on Education,

My name is Dr. Xiaoying Lin. I'm writing to strongly urge you to pass Assembly Bill 232. As a college professor, whenever I have a conversation with students about Asian American history, very few of them know much of anything and can carry on a basic dialogue. They often apologize to me for their lack of awareness and knowledge. This is not right.

Learning Asian American history is a powerful tool to reduce ignorance and racism in our society. By studying this history, we gain knowledge and understanding about the diverse cultures, traditions, and contributions of Asian Americans. This education helps to break down stereotypes and dispel misconceptions that often lead to ignorance and prejudice.

When we learn about the experiences and struggles of Asian Americans, it humanizes them and fosters empathy and respect. We begin to appreciate the rich tapestry of their stories and recognize their valuable contributions to our country's history and development. This knowledge creates a foundation of understanding that promotes inclusivity and acceptance, challenging racist attitudes and behaviors.

Moreover, learning Asian American history provides an opportunity to confront and address systemic racism and discrimination. By examining historical injustices and the fight for civil rights, we become more aware of the harmful impact of racism and are inspired to actively work towards a more equitable and just society.

In essence, education in Asian American history helps us break down barriers of ignorance and challenge racist beliefs by promoting understanding, empathy, and a commitment to equality. It encourages dialogue, critical thinking, and a willingness to challenge stereotypes, ultimately contributing to the dismantling of racism in our communities and fostering a more inclusive and harmonious society for all.

Thank you!  
Dr. Xiaoying Lin

Hello Sirs,

My name is Kathleen Kludt, and I live in Mequon, WI. As a martial arts instructor and taekwondo school owner, I was very excited about the scheduling of the hearing for Assembly Bill 232. Growing up in the 1970's, we learned very little about Asian culture and history. We learned very little about history from any Asian countries, and I am quite sure I was unaware of what all of the nations even were.

In 2016 I had an opportunity to travel to South Korea with our taekwondo school, along with my teacher, Grandmaster J.K. Lee. My family discovered the amazing Korean people were kind, respectful, and gracious. The countryside was breathtaking, and while we were there we learned much about the Korean people's struggle for independence, their indomitable spirit, and the origin of the country's #1 export - Taekwondo! Training and learning about the history of taekwondo has changed my life, and has now shaped many of my every day behaviors!

Ironically, just today an 8-year old student came up to me with great excitement, telling me about the Kobukson, or the "Turtle Ship". He talked about the mud and brush used to cover the spikes on the top of the ship for camouflage, the "fire breathing dragon" on the front of the ship where the guns fired through, and all about the admiral who invented the ship. Sadly, this boy did not learn this in school. His study of martial arts compelled this ambitious young man to do research on his own, and he discovered a whole new world!

Please support AB 232, and open up a whole new world for our young people.

Thank you, and PILSUNG! (Which means "certain victory" in Korean)  
Kathleen Kludt

Good Evening,

My name is Raifeh Saqer I am sending in my testimony for the hearing on Thursday, May 25th, at 9:31 am at the State Capitol building in Madison, Room 417 North (GAR Hall). I am unable to make it in person but want give my statement. It is so important that education expands on of AAPI and Hmong Americans in public schools. There is so much to learn from all cultures out there and there is so many assumptions that people make because they are not educated. If it is taught in public schools it is also allowing other people to get a voice and also to be seen. It is super important to share and show where people came from and how they got there especially AAPI and Hmong Americans.

Best Regards,  
Raifeh S.



Hello, my name is Eugenia Ethel Glozman.

My son Gabriel is a member of J.K.Lee academy. When Mr.Gormon shared his project with other kids, my son was very excited about it and said that he wants to help. He loves his marshalls art school and I as his mom see big improvements in his behavior. On classes kids not only learn marshalls arts but also philosophy and stories about life in Korea. For example, teachers not only give korean names of the forms, but also explain meanings and history of the names. My son study in the second grade and that's what he wanted to share with you.

"Learning about Asia is very good for you because there is a lot of interesting things you can learn. In Korea there are a lot of marshall artists. It's good to be a marshall artist because when you get a black belt, you become more focused and pay attention to small details. "

I'm sure that all kids will really benefit if they will be learning asian history and philosophy at school.

Thank you.

Eugenia Ethel Glozman

Dear Representative Kitchens,

We are writing in support of Assembly Bill 232. A little bit about us. We are the quintessential suburban, American family – a mom, a dad, two kids, boy and a girl. We work hard at our jobs and at school and participate in Taekwondo as a family. One of our fellow Black Belts as part of his Second Degree Black Belt testing service project wanted to raise awareness about a topic near and dear to his heart. It was humbling to learn that Asian American history was not required to be taught in Wisconsin schools, even more so that we learned this from a 13-year old.

Growing up a military brat, allowed me a unique perspective. My dad was stationed in Germany after the Berlin Wall came down in '89. I developed a healthy appreciation for other cultures, while maintaining a proud American stance. Moving to new places, settling, making friends -- this was the common pattern of my childhood and one I thought nothing of when I was married and started my own family.

Our family has enjoyed and been welcomed by the Asian American communities in Tosa, West Allis, Brookfield, Whitefish Bay, Fox Point, Milwaukee, etc. We are grateful to have friends and mentors of Chinese, Korean, Indian, Taiwanese heritage who share their culture, their food, their fears, hopes, and dreams with us.

History absent the context of individual groups is an incomplete and inaccurate history. Asian American communities have become just as “American” as European settlers or any of the multitude of different cultures that have become embedded in the fabric of our country. Having blind spots in historical curriculum will leave our children disadvantaged to deal with issues of our ever-evolving society and increasingly global economy.

As transplants from the East Coast, our family has been impressed with how Wisconsin schools' curriculum addresses African American history and that of other minorities. I remember my daughter coming home in first grade and telling us all about Ruby Bridges. It opened the door to amazing, age appropriate discussions. The same should be true of Asian American history.

All kids should get to see themselves represented in history to foster a more successful community for the future. The strength of America is in our diversity and the melting pot ideals that brought all our families together!

Respectfully and humbly,

The Holcomb Family (Danielle, Hunter, Logan, and Natalia)

Hello,

My name is Kalai TaiHook and I'm writing to ask that you support Assembly Bill 232.

As a POC (Asian and Pacific Islander descent), it's important that this history is taught in our schools. I grew up in Hawaii, a state very rich in Polynesian and Asian history and it wasn't until I was an adult that I learned about the Chinese Exclusion Act. It's this type of history that we need to remember in order to learn from our past and create a better future for our children.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Kalai TaiHook



DATE: May 23, 2023  
TO: Representative Kitchens  
FROM: Milwaukee Chinese Community Center (MCCC)

The MCCC thanks you for scheduling a public hearing for Assembly Bill 232 this Thursday, May 25, 2023, that includes the teaching of Asian American & Pacific Islanders and Hmong Americans history, culture & contributions in WI public schools. We recognize the need for AAPI & Hmong American history to be taught in our K-12 schools, as there are many different groups who have immigrated and/or born in this state, namely, Hmong, Lao, Cambodian, Vietnamese, South Asians, East Asians, and Pacific Islanders.

Our MCCC mainly consists of people who were born in China, educated in the STEM & business fields, raised our children, and have made WI our home. Because of our fields of professional interest, we engender certain dangers, unlike other Asian groups, one area of suspicion has been the area of spying or stealing of trade or military secrets - the media has periodically reported on these accusations. Another is the purchase of US-owned businesses and properties, as indicated by some states passing legislation prohibiting certain sales to Chinese. This adds to the tenuous nature Asians have previously been earmarked as disloyal and promotes the anti-Asian sentiments similar to those during the Covid-19 era. Where there is hate, we need to educate.

We hope that AB232 will enable the teaching of AAPI & Hmong American history, culture & contributions will enlighten and lessen these anti-Asian sentiments. Inasmuch as we continue to privately educate our children in our native language and culture, we also want to educate WI students to know about our different AAPI groups, whose histories, cultures & contributions have enriched the economic, social and cultural fabric of WI. We strongly support the passing of AB232.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jilin Sun'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Milwaukee Chinese Community Center (MCCC)

May 21, 2023

Dear Representative Joel Kitchens,

Thank you for agreeing to consider 2023 Assembly Bill 232 in your committee. As Chair of the Committee on Education, it is clear that you are very dedicated to the education of the students of the State of Wisconsin.

As a current junior in the Milwaukee area, I would like to share my reasons for why I think this bill should be supported.

First, even though I have no Asian heritage, I have taken mandarin since sixth grade and had the opportunity to visit China during middle school. I have done this because I have always been impressed by the fact that one out of every five people in the world are Asian. I believe it is important for every American student to know some history about the part of the world that encompasses so many of its inhabitants. This is especially important since Eastern culture, traditions, language, and medicine is so different from what we are daily exposed to in a Western society. It will make us better prepared to be American citizens in a more connected global community to have this knowledge.

Second, as a child of an immigrant, I know what it is like to be forced to dissociate yourself from your home culture. Many Japanese Americans were forced to do this during World War II. Many Chinese Americans feel this way now because of bias stemming from the pandemic. By living in a country where you do not know your own cultural heritage and neither do other students around you, a huge opportunity is missed to easily learn about a culture first hand without even needing to leave your home state. This, again, prepares you for the future.

I know that a similar bill has not been supported in the past. In reviewing the current bill, the requested amendment is very minor. As stated, "Current law requires each school board to provide an instruction program designed to give pupils an understanding of human relations, ..." It is hard to think that this understanding of human relations would be complete without including 20% of the world's population by adding the simple phrase, "Hmong and Asian Americans."

Please consider the power of this simple amendment to open the minds and to better position Wisconsin students.

Respectfully,

Azara

**May 25, 2023 Public Hearing Testimony for AB 232  
Lorna Young on Behalf of the AAPI Coalition of Wisconsin**

The following testimony is from Lorna Young, a Milwaukee resident, who is on the Executive Committee of the AAPI Coalition of Wisconsin, and is co-chair of the Coalition's Education Committee.

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Thank you Chair Joel Kitchens, Vice Chair Barbara Dittrich, and Legislative members of the Wisconsin Assembly's Committee on Education, for bringing the proposed AB 232 bill forward to this public hearing.

I am on the Executive Committee of the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Coalition of Wisconsin, and am co-chair of the Coalition's Education sub-committee. The AAPI Coalition of Wisconsin was formed in 2020 in response to the rise of anti-Asian hate. It is the first statewide organization to bring together the collective voice of the AAPI community. Our Coalition includes over 20 Wisconsin AAPI organizations, businesses, leaders, and elected officials to advocate for the AAPI community.

Our Coalition seeks to amplify the AAPI voice and representation in Wisconsin. We do this by connecting our communities to issues that affect us directly and growing the civic engagement of our AAPI communities to be influential voices in our democratic processes. And education is one such unifying issue for our Asian American community.

The AAPI Coalition applauds your holding this Public Hearing on AB 232, as it is an important legislative proposal aimed at amending Act 31 to include Hmong Americans and Asian Americans in the public school curriculum across the state of Wisconsin. And we seek for this proposed amendment to be passed by the legislature in this legislative session so that all school districts are chartered to implement lesson plans for their K-12 students and teacher training to support a positive learning environment.

Why is this bill important to Asian Americans across Wisconsin? The Asian American community has been invisible for so long in the US, and in particular, in Wisconsin.

- Our demographic profile differs significantly from the rest of the US. Did you know that the Hmong are the #1 Asian origin group in Wisconsin? This is unlike many states on our two coasts, as the Hmong comprise over one quarter of Wisconsin's AAPI population. This makes Wisconsin's Asian American experience unique to this state,
- Asian Americans in Wisconsin also include who are first, second, third, and even fourth generation, whose family members have lived and worked in Wisconsin for over 100 years, and have greatly contributed to our state's history, culture, economy, and public service.
- And recently, Milwaukee is the home to the largest community of Burmese Rohingya refugees.
- Asian Americans are currently about 4% of Wisconsin's population. This may seem like a small percentage, but what is significant, is that the AAPI community is projected to be growing, particularly for school-age children. One of the ways we see this is that some of our school districts have 10-20% AAPI in their K-12 student population.

It is with a heavy heart that we must cite the example of the recent situation in Wausau, where a Hmong-Lao high school senior experienced offensive language and inappropriate conduct on a repeated basis by his band teacher, in front of his fellow students. This student, who is an honors student and well-liked by his peers, is now experiencing trauma as he prepares to graduate. Teachers should lead and guide, and not humiliate, make fun of, and dehumanize students. Any teacher who exhibits behavior that is discriminatory and offensive undermines the very essence of education and sets a negative example for their students... and the Wisconsin community.

What is especially serious about this situation is that in Wisconsin, the Wausau school district has the largest proportion of AAPI students of 20% in their K-12 schools. If school districts such as Wausau were truly committed to address the needs of their community, they should be taking the lead to demonstrate that their teachers, in all subjects from kindergarten through 12th grade, are positive role models through fostering a comprehensive learning environment for all students, but particularly for our AAPI communities. This is an example of the harm that the invisibility of the AAPI experience has on the entire community... such situations need to be proactively handled by our school districts in their educational curriculum and teacher training.

Whether our school districts have a large or small number of Asian American students, or whether they are in urban, rural, or suburban areas, an AAPI curriculum enhances the ability of all students to understand and navigate differences, and collaborate with others...these are essential skills for all walks of life as our students enter the world beyond their school districts.

In a time of rising anti-Asian hate and violence, education is our most powerful tool to promote empathy and understanding. Education will bring our students greater awareness, knowledge, and understanding of the diverse AAPI communities in Wisconsin so that all students are better prepared to be productive citizens in an increasingly changing world while fostering the development of positive relationships, self-image, and identity for AAPI students across Wisconsin.

We recall that in January 19, 2022, the Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) passed Resolution 22-07. The resolution states:

“The WASB encourages Wisconsin public schools to develop an educational curriculum and professional training to teach the history, culture, and contributions of Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders to the economic, cultural, and social development of Wisconsin and the USA. The WASB also requests the state Legislature provide sufficient funding to develop an appropriate model curriculum and training package.”

The passage of this WASB resolution shows that our state’s educators support our mission. However, this was only the first step towards implementing an AAPI educational curriculum. We look to you to move Assembly Bill 232 forward, and to support its passage to achieve an instructional program and professional training about Hmong Americans and Asian Americans in our K-12 public schools. The heritage of Hmong Americans and Asian Americans is integral to the fabric of Wisconsin. Please work to make sure that our education system includes, celebrates, and honors this heritage. Thank you.

Lorna Young, Co-chair, AAPI Coalition of Wisconsin’s Education Committee

Dear Representative Joel Kitchens and Senator John Jagler,

My name is Dr. Sharon Scherwitz. I am a retired Philosophy Professor from the University of Wisconsin La Crosse. I was a student in Wisconsin and then taught for the University of Wisconsin system for over Thirty years. One of my areas of teaching was in Multicultural Philosophy in the United States. The majority of my students were products of the Wisconsin K-12 education system. Most of them grew up in a period of Hmong resettlement into Wisconsin and the growth of the Hmong community here to be largest refugee population in the state.

As you know Wisconsin is the state with the third largest Hmong population in the United States. Despite this I found Wisconsin trained students to be very deficient in their knowledge about the Hmong Communities and their history. Even though they were students in a location with a very vibrant Hmong community they were oblivious to many features of both their home communities and the area where they were pursuing their University education.

Hmong students always had to struggle with lack of curriculum that acknowledged their cultural background and were stymied by the educational system that was contributing to the erosion of literacy skills in Hmong language. This puts severe strain on what is already identified by linguists as an endangered language, divided the Hmong community between Hmong speaking elders and non-Hmong speaking youth, and hobbled the transmission of key cultural Hmong values and practices. I want to stress to you that the losses that this brings harms all Wisconsin citizens. In an increasing diversifying world our students need to function with all groups in their communities to respect cultural differences and to confront the hostilities and violence that has dogged underrepresented groups. Act 31, with the amendment of AB232, is a beginning step to address the insularity that has dominated Wisconsin education.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sharon Scherwitz



Education Committee Chair Joel Kitchens,

My name is Cameron PajYeeb Yang and I am the Development Manager at Freedom, Inc., a non profit organization located in Madison, Wisconsin and a current PhD student studying Education Policy and Leadership at the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities. I am writing to ask you and your committee members to vote in support of AB 232 so that all Wisconsin school boards will be required to provide their enrolled students a curriculum and instruction that includes Asian American and Hmong American histories.

Growing up Asian American and Hmong American, it wasn't until I had graduated from high school in 2013 that I began to learn about the histories of my people. It is because of this historical knowledge that boosted my self-awareness, esteem and identity, and in turn further increased my desire to pursue a higher education. It is of no surprise to me that many young Asian Americans and Hmong Americans are still struggling to better understand who they are. As Asian Americans and Hmong Americans continue to be excluded in many aspects of our society, these issues will continue to exist. Supporting AB 232 will lead our greater society in the right direction of diversity and inclusion. Asian American and Hmong American histories need to be included within the already listed required Wisconsin ethnic study curriculums.

Thank you for your consideration and I truly hope you and the members of the committee of Education vote in support of AB 232.

Best,  
Cameron PajYeeb Yang

--

**Cameron PajYeeb Yang, they/them/theirs/nws**  
Development Manager  
[cyang@freedom-inc.org](mailto:cyang@freedom-inc.org)  
(608) 515-5518

Freedom, Inc.  
2110 Luann Lane  
Madison, WI 53713  
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Dear Senator Kitchens et al.

My name is Angelica Varona Camara, President of the Filipino American Association of Wisconsin and former President of The Filipino American National Historical Society. I am a co-liasion of the Filipino Catholic Ministry, a part of the Intercultural Ministries of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. I was once a President of the Home and School Committee for Northwest Catholic Schools.

I write this as a Filipino American who came to the US in 1972 to reside in Wisconsin. My parents, 2 people of many, were recruited in Manila, The Philippines as physicians to serve the US communities, settling in Wisconsin, due to the health staffing shortage. I was educated in American History and World History from kindergarten to High School. I learned more about my identity as an adult Filipina and the impact of the roles my community played to strengthen and enrich the US diaspora. I did not learn more about Asian cultures as a grade school and high school student.

Filipinos are the second-largest Asian American group in the nation after Latinas/os and African Americans. As a group, we celebrate Filipino American History Month in October commemorating the first recorded presence of Filipinos in the continental United States, occurring "on October 18, 1587, when "Luzones Indios" came ashore from the Spanish galleon Nuestra Senora de Esperanza and landed at what is now Morro Bay, California. In 2009, U.S. Congress recognized October as Filipino American History Month in the United States." It was in 2007, with the help of then Senator Leland Yee that I presented facts to him that Filipino American History Month was not recognized and legal in the US.

It is an honor to know that you, Senator Kitchens, is the main author of this Bill to put into law the requirement that Asian American History be included in the curriculum of students. As I grew up in the US, I was taught that Asia is Asia Major and Asia Minor, that American leaders such as General Douglas McArthur is known for his phrase " I shall return" as the focal point of importance that saved Asian Countries in the Pacific Ocean. In my child education years, I was taught of the following, also currently found for homeschooled children:

(Taken from resources, [High School US History I Curriculum | Time4Learning](#))

*US History I curriculum topics should include:*

- *Voyages of Columbus and the relationship between the explorers and the American Indians*
- *Colonization, the different colonies, and colonial life*
- *The Declaration of Independence, the Revolutionary war, the constitution, and the Bill of Rights*
- *Washington's presidency and the new political parties*
- *The War of 1812 and the Monroe Doctrine*
- *Manifest Destiny, and the Indian Removal Act of 1830*
- *Sectionalism, slavery in American culture, and the rise of abolition*

- *Life during the Civil War and the southern surrender*
- *Lincoln's goals for reconstruction and the rise of Jim Crow laws*

*As the year comes to a close, your child should have an acute understanding of the migration process to America, the thirteen colonies, the Revolutionary and Civil wars, the reconstruction and expansion of America, and more.*

*Some objectives you can establish include:*

- *Understand the relationships between the colonies and the American Indians*
- *Explain the key turning points in the Revolutionary war*
- *Demonstrate an understanding of the Constitution and Bill of Rights*
- *Accurately describe the impact of industrialization and the economic impact of slavery*
- *Explain key strategies of the north and south during the civil war*
- *Describe the challenges faced during the construction of the transcontinental railroad*

As you can see from the curriculum above, it does not include much of Asian and Asian American History as an impact that created awareness of diversity, positivity, peace, identity and increased economic gifts through inventions and shared ideas by Asians and Asian Americans.

Studies of Cultural and racial Heterogeneity creates peace, strength in numbers that help to make positive choices, promote a greater understanding in children of young ages while also teaching parents, families and guardians along the way which leads to a decrease in hatred, Anti Asian hate crimes, decrease in microaggression, biases and doubt and a decrease in ignorance.

Examples of unknown facts:

In historical events, students may hear of Cinco De Mayo and Cesar Chavez as a hero but ignore the fact that it was Larry Itliong, a Filipino, the actual hero and the Filipino Farm workers in Delano, California who initially started the Great Delano Grape Strike for increase of wages. These are not in the books. The various inventions, accomplishments of everyday comfort such as the GPS, the comfort foods, explorations in space inventions are unknown.

The Filipino healthcare groups, such as here in Wisconsin, helped to service the healthcare industry due to staffing shortages in late 1960s to the 1970s.

The assistance of language translators such as the Lao, Thai, Burmese, Karen, Kareni, Royhiga, Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos during various wars, their struggles, conflicts and challenges by global refugees, so much of their amazing cultures and traditions to know but are not taught of their global impact.

The Philippines was once a country of the US, people were US nationals. US Military bases were once formed, closed and currently, bases are added again for security of the South China Sea under...partnerships.

Areas of now Texas were once called New Philippines before the Mexican-American War.

The St. Louis World Fair of 1904 lumped together 1100 Native Filipinos who were diverse in traditions and culture but corralled, exploited, and presented like the zoo animals as an attraction. These were part of the celebration of the Louisiana Purchase, the biggest land acquisition in US history. These were never taught.

So, I ask you to please approve the requirement of Asian American studies in the K-12 Curriculum. Education and understanding is the force for creating peace, knowledge, enlightenment, faith and better decisions for the American and global Diaspora.

Thank you.

Angelica Varona Camara

Growing up in WI during the 40's-60's, there was just a small population of Filipinos or Filipino Americans. I remember being the only one in grade school. There were three of us among 1200 in high school and one of six Asians in college. The text books that were in print at the time only had a nod to the Asian part of the world.

I recall just a brief mention in the history books to the Philippines. The longest paragraphs were mostly in connection to WWII. And the geography books mentioned that the Philippines was an archipelago in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. There were a few more sentences about the weather and crops, specifically, the rice terraces.

By the time I became a teacher in the 70's, we were classified as Orientals. I don't remember when the term changed to Asians or Asian Americans. And, I don't remember what we were classified before then. Sometimes, I heard white, Caucasian, mestiza. I did not pay too much attention. At that time it was just to fill in a box on some form. Being half Hispanic and only one box with one number allowed on the forms, each year my employer had one more Oriental and the next year one less Oriental but one more SpanishAmerican as it was noted then.

When I became a teacher, I tried to introduce my students to different cultures through literature, stories, music and food. I was also very active in the annual Holiday Folk Fair. I learned much about what all our cultures had in common and where we differed. At our school, we brought in various ethnic groups to perform including the Philippine group. Our music and phy ed teachers helped the children learn some of the dances in their classes as well as what we did in our regular classes. I also brought in the parents of our Korean, Vietnamese, and other groups to share snippets of their culture. However, these attempts to enrich the curriculum was only scratching the surface.

We truly need a more comprehensive curriculum for all our students and teachers. By learning about our commonality and understanding our differences, we become more appreciative of one another as human beings.

Isabel Maria Piana, M.A.

Filipino-American National Historical Society - WI Chapter President 2023-2024