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# PATRICK SNYDER

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

## Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 240

Senate Committee on Education

January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024

Chairman Jagler and Members of the Committee:

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

Senate Bill 240 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 SB 240 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.



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# CORY TOMCZYK

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

## SB 240

Senate Committee on Education  
Tuesday, January 23, 2024

Thank you for hearing SB 240.

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. SB 240 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>i</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 SB 240 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>i</sup> Hmong American Center – [www.hmongamericancenter.org](http://www.hmongamericancenter.org)

# FRANCESCA HONG

State Representative • 76th Assembly District

January 23rd, 2024

Chair Jagler, Vice-Chair Quinn, and members of the Senate Committee on Education, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 240.

This public hearing marks a significant milestone in what has been many years of bipartisan effort to ensure instruction on Hmong Americans and Asian Americans in our education curriculum here in Wisconsin.

I'm especially grateful to my colleagues, Representatives Snyder and Shankland as well as Senator Tomcyk and all of our staff.

This bill has been a statewide effort led by students, educators, community members from all across the state (Stevens Point to Germantown, Eau Claire to Appleton) and legislators of all backgrounds who believe that the stories and histories of Asian Americans deserve to be told and to be heard in our classrooms.

There are many organizations and student led groups who have championed this bill. I'd like to especially recognize representatives from Freedom Inc, and the AAPI Coalition of Wisconsin for their efforts.

I have to note that SB 240 is very important to me as a lifelong Wisconsinite and as a Korean American. My parents made Wisconsin home after immigrating here, and my sister and I grew up loving Wisconsin, but often had complex feelings and struggled with our Korean identity. I think it was partly due to my parents' struggle with *how* to raise us- more American or more Korean knowing our classrooms rarely provided spaces to learn about Asian American history. My mental health suffered and I would defensively minimize my identity, my Koreanness. When someone would ask where I was from or refer to me as Korean, Chinese or Japanese I would retort back I was born here! I'm just American.

I share these personal tidbits with you all today because there is immense value in learning history to better understand our own experiences. And when we share experiences we grow connections to help understand one another, something I think we can all benefit from.

When I go to schools to tell my story and talk about the legislature, I get so many responses from students telling me they relate to my identity and mental health struggles because these are indeed universal struggles that impact students of all different races, ethnic backgrounds and zip codes. Many Asian American students also tell me that it's important to them to have representation in their textbooks and have spaces at school to talk about their stories. It's critical

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# FRANCESCA HONG

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State Representative • 76th Assembly District

for students to be able to be their fullest self to reach their fullest potential and this bill is a small but critical step for that in all of our Wisconsin public schools.

With SB 240, I believe we are moving towards validating the cultural heritage of thousands of Asian American students in our state and will build healthier learning environments where students from all backgrounds feel represented and valued with lessons that illuminate and celebrate different identities- ultimately enhancing their educational experience and overall academic success.

Also keep in mind that one of the fundamental goals of education is to prepare students to become active and engaged citizens in a changing society. I know that this is a goal shared by all of you on this committee. By including history about Hmong Americans and Asian Americans in instructional curriculum, we can provide Wisconsin students with a well-rounded education that reflects the realities of our multicultural state and nation.

I want to especially emphasize that the benefits of this legislation extend beyond just Asian American students. This knowledge will broaden the perspectives of **All** Wisconsin students and equip them with the necessary tools to thrive in an increasingly interconnected and globalized world.


Exposure to diverse cultures and histories promotes critical thinking skills, empathy, and the ability to work collaboratively in dynamic settings. So while this is very much a bill that fills in the blanks of our past, it also looks at our future and is a crucial step towards building a better Wisconsin moving forward.

You'll find out today just how important it is for Wisconsin community members who have shown up today to testify and to a strong bipartisan coalition of legislators in the Senate & Assembly.

So I want to more than anything, to extend my thanks that this bill was brought to a public hearing. Today might be the history itself that I hope my son and future generations can learn about in school. And I hope this session will finally be the one where we can collectively make that happen.

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# AMASIAN

## Wisconsin Senate Public Hearing; Testimony for SB 240 on January 23, 2024

Thank you Chair John Jagler, Vice Chair Romaine Quinn, and Legislative members of the Wisconsin Senate's Committee on Education, for bringing the proposed SB 240 bill forward to this public hearing.

My name is Laura Lahti, I am a resident of Fitchburg and Founder of AMASIAN. The AMASIAN organization is dedicated to fostering professional growth, cultural exchange and leadership development within the Asian American community. As a transracial adoptee, growing up in the suburbs of Saint Paul, Minnesota I knew very little about AAPI communities and cultures. Just IMAGINE that ALL the children had the opportunity to learn about Hmong and Asian American history. I see so many positive attributes, and this is why...

**Diverse Perspectives:** Enriches the educational experience by offering diverse perspectives. It allows students to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the state's cultural tapestry and the contributions of various communities.

**Cultural Awareness:** Education plays a crucial role in fostering cultural awareness and understanding. Students can develop a greater appreciation for the rich cultural heritage of these communities, promoting tolerance and reducing stereotypes.

**Community Recognition:** This recognition fosters a sense of belonging among Asian communities and contributes to a more inclusive and united society.

**Global Perspective:** In an increasingly interconnected world, understanding different cultures is essential. Provides students with a global perspective, helping them navigate an increasingly diverse and interconnected global community.

**Empowerment:** Incorporating the stories and achievements of Hmong Americans and Asian Americans can empower students from these communities. Curriculum can inspire pride and motivation, encouraging them to pursue their goals and contribute positively to society.

**Promoting Equity:** Educational curricula should reflect the diversity of the population it serves. By including the histories of Hmong Americans and Asian Americans, the curriculum becomes more equitable, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to learn about and appreciate the contributions of various cultural groups.

**Preventing Erasure:** Including them in the educational curriculum helps preserve and transmit these stories to future generations.

In summary, amending Wisconsin's state statute to include Hmong American and Asian American history in the educational curriculum is a step towards a more inclusive, diverse, and culturally rich learning environment. It not only benefits students by providing a more comprehensive education but also contributes to the overall strength and unity of the community. **Thank you, Laura Lahti, Founder of AMASIAN**



AAPI Coalition of WI &lt;wiaapi@gmail.com&gt;

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## Testimony

1 message

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fimih7 <fimih7@gmail.com>

Mon, Jan 22, 2024 at 9:21 PM

To: Sen.Jagler@legis.wisconsin.gov

Cc: Charlie.Bellin@wisconsin.gov, rep.hong@legis.wisconsin.gov, wiaapi@gmail.com

Dear Senator Jagler,

My name is Fiona Hernandez. I am a sophomore at University School of Milwaukee. I'm writing to urge you to pass Senate Bill 240. Here is why:

It is necessary for the inclusion of Asian American History and Hmong history in the school curriculum. They are a part of America's History too. If they are excluded, a piece of the whole is missing. Teaching kids about the history of Asian Americans and Hmong people, whether they identify as Asian American or not, is important because it is part of their own history. The up and coming generation must know the happenings of their history. Not only does this further the knowledge of the past, it also allows the voices of Asian Americans and Hmong people of the present to be heard. As someone who identifies as Asian American, growing up without proper representation really took a toll on me. I didn't know where my place was. I didn't know the history of my people and how they fitted in the history that is my home. Other kids, who were not educated, would make fun of me, simply for existing as an Asian American. Kids would call me "Kimmy", short for Kim Jong Un, and I'm not even Korean. It implied that I'm not even a part of this country, that instead I'm a foreigner who represents Kim Jong Un. This is just one example of microaggressions I've faced. It made me feel unwelcomed and I truly believe that if we were taught that Asian Americans are as much of an American as anyone else, I would've had a different experience. The voices of Asian Americans should not be silenced. Including their stories into the curriculum is a sure way to let them be heard.

Thank you,  
Fiona Hernandez



AAPI Coalition of WI &lt;wiaapi@gmail.com&gt;

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**Written Public Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 240/Assembly Bill 232**

1 message

**Vik Verma** <v2aggie2@gmail.com>

Mon, Jan 22, 2024 at 9:54 PM

To: Sen.Jagler@legis.wisconsin.gov

Cc: Charlie.Bellin@wisconsin.gov, rep.hong@legis.wisconsin.gov, wiaapi@gmail.com

Dear Senator Jagler,

I am writing this email to express my strong support for Senate Bill 240/Assembly Bill 232, which would amend Wisconsin's current state statute of heritage and history to include Hmong American and Asian Americans in Wisconsin's educational curriculum. The current bill includes Native American, Hispanic and African American history but not Hmong American and Asian American History.

The history of the Hmong-American community in Wisconsin is an integral part of the state's history. The Hmong-American Community is the largest Asian-American community in Wisconsin. The community has enhanced our state. And in cities such as Wausau, where more than 10% of the population is Hmong, the impact of the community is deeply felt. With this in mind, it is beneficial to all Wisconsinites to learn more about the Hmong Community, and amending the current state statute will help accomplish this goal.

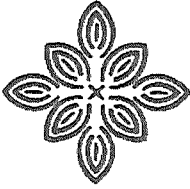
In addition, adding Asian-American history overall will benefit history education in Wisconsin and bring attention to communities who are often not understood. As the son of Indian immigrants who arrived in the United States in 1969, I can attest that my parents are a part of a long history that most people are unaware of. These experiences should be shared with our whole state. In the process, we learn from each other.

In summary, I strongly urge the committee and the legislature as a whole to support Senate Bill 240/Assembly Bill 232. Our state motto is "Forward." And this bill will move our state forward.

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions.

Thanks

Vik Verma  
165 Lamp Lighter Drive, Apartment 9  
Kaukauna, Wisconsin 54130  
(903) 522-1304  
v2aggie2@gmail.com



Cia Siab, Inc.

Cia Siab, Inc.

1825 Sunset Ln., La Crosse, WI 54601 | email: [admin@ciasiabinc.org](mailto:admin@ciasiabinc.org)

Office: (608) 615 - 7117 | M-F 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

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

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January 22, 2023

Dear Senators John Jagler and Romaine Quinn,

Please accept and share with your colleagues this letter of strong support for Senate Bill 240 (SB240), which seeks to amend 118.01 (2) (c) 8. of the statutes, requiring the teaching of Hmong American and Asian American history. Our organization, Cia Siab, Inc., is located in La Crosse County. Our mission is to build a culturally vibrant Hmong (Hmoob) community. One of the most important ways we attempt to accomplish this is through the teaching of Hmoob cultural history, values, and language to the younger generations of Hmoob people living and working in Wisconsin. SB240 supports this mission, and we hope that you will support it.

La Crosse County is home to approximately 6,000 Hmoob people, most of whom have never had the opportunity to learn about themselves through formal education. The preservation and teaching of Hmoob language, history, and culture is critical to the positive self identity of young Hmoob people. It is also critical for non-Hmoob residents of Wisconsin to learn about their neighbors, coworkers, and classmates in order to begin to counteract anti-Asian racism, discrimination, and violence..

For 15 years, our staff coordinated the Widening the Circle conference, designed to help educators understand and creatively implement the educational requirements of Act 31, which SB240 will update. We understand deeply the benefits of requiring the teaching of the full range of histories of the people of Wisconsin to our children.

Your support of SB240 helps ensure that Wisconsinites exit public education with all of the tools necessary to ensure their future success as global citizens. One of the most critical skills for them to master is making sense of complicated histories in order to understand and improve present realities. The curriculum developed and shared as a result of this bill will provide generations of Wisconsin students with necessary context about the history of Hmoob people and other Asian American communities in our state. More specifically, it will demonstrate to young Hmoob people that their history, language, and cultural contributions to their communities is vital.

We thank you in advance for doing all that you can to encourage your colleagues in the legislature to support SB240.

Sincerely,

Xong Xiong, Ed.D.  
Executive Director

<https://www.ciasiabinc.org/>

Follow us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CiaSiabInc/>

**Advocate . Support . Revitalize . Empower**

Building a Culturally Vibrant Hmoob Community.





AAPI Coalition of WI &lt;wiaapi@gmail.com&gt;

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**Pan Testimony for Assembly Bill SB 240/AB 232**

1 message

**Emily Pan** <27epan@ga.usmk12.org>

Mon, Jan 22, 2024 at 10:05 PM

To: Sen.Jagler@legis.wisconsin.gov, Charlie.Bellin@wisconsin.gov, rep.hong@legis.wisconsin.gov, wiaapi@gmail.com, haiyun@ignitechinese.org

Dear Senator Jagler,

My name is Emily Pan, and I am a freshman at the University School of Milwaukee. I write to you to urge you to push for the passing of Assembly Bill SB 240, mandating the long-ignored history of Asian Americans and Hmong Americans in public education.

As a Chinese American who once was in the public school system for the large majority of my elementary and middle school years, I've always felt the distinct and pervasive lack of education surrounding non-Eurocentric education in schools. We never even grazed the surface of the rich history and prominent contributions of Asian and Hmong people in America. It was not even mentioned in passing. This is regrettably a missed opportunity for Wisconsin students to contribute to a more informed and tolerant society by learning about the struggles, achievements, and unique experiences of our communities. Please consider the impact this momentous bill would have. Not only will students learn to be more respectful and inclusive of all cultures, but it will also promote a sense of belonging among students of all backgrounds, and fill a large gap in our curriculums. We deserve to learn our own history, and others deserve to learn beyond the scope that our currently limited curriculum can cover.

Thank you for your consideration, and I sincerely hope you will support Assembly Bill SB 240/AB 232 for the betterment of the Wisconsin community. We must set a positive example for inclusivity and representation in education for all.

Sincerely,

**Emily Pan**1455 W. Hidden River Dr.  
Mequon, WI 53092  
27epan@ga.usmk12.org  
(262)-225-5227



AAPI Coalition of WI &lt;wiaapi@gmail.com&gt;

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**Call to action: Co-sponsoring Assembly Bill 232/Senate Bill 240**

1 message

**E Her Vang** <elilyher@gmail.com>

Mon, Jan 22, 2024 at 10:07 PM

To: Sen.Jagler@legis.wisconsin.gov

Cc: Charlie.Bellin@wisconsin.gov, rep.hong@legis.wisconsin.gov, AAPI Coalition of WI &lt;wiaapi@gmail.com&gt;

Hello Senator Jagler,

My name is E Her Vang and I am writing to you on behalf of the AAPI Coalition of Wisconsin. This coalition 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, and includes over 20 Wisconsin AAPI organizations, businesses, leaders, and elected officials to advocate for the AAPI community.

**I am urging you to co-sponsor Assembly Bill 232/Senate Bill 240**, which seeks to amend Act 31 (from 1989) to direct Wisconsin school boards to include K-12 instructional programs regarding Hmong Americans and Asian Americans. We seek this proposed amendment to be passed by Wisconsin's legislature 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 for all students.

I commend the Wisconsin State Assembly Committee on Education for holding a public hearing for AB 232 on May 25, 2023, and on October 10, for unanimously voting to send AB 232 to the Assembly floor for a vote. This marks a significant milestone in recognizing the vital role of AAPI contributions to Wisconsin's history, culture, and economy. At the Assembly public hearing, I alongside over 50 community members and allies provided testimonies.

My testimony included my experiences working in education and how this bill will support all WI students' learning and our state's educational system. I know you co-authored the "Right to Read" act so you're an advocate for higher education. I work closely with 8th grade classrooms and have seen evidence that when students feel belonging and connectedness to the curriculum their reading and engagement improves.

According to the 2018-2019 Madison Metropolitan School District student data, 77% of Hmong students were not proficient in reading and 64% were not proficient in math. Supporting this bill means you are continuing to close the achievement gap in WI and show value in students' connection to their learning environment. I hope we can count on your vote so more students can thrive in their learning.

As a next step, I request that you, as the Chair, along with the members of the Senate's Education Committee schedule SB 240 for a public hearing. This bipartisan legislation will ensure that the heritage and history of Hmong and Asian Americans are given the attention and inclusion they deserve in our public schools, by making a very simple change to state statute (from 1989), which already includes American Indians, Black Americans, and Hispanics.

Our children deserve to know their story, the story of their peers, and the story of Wisconsin. Please cosponsor this legislation and request that this important bill be scheduled for a public hearing by the Senate's Education Committee. It is essential that you champion this legislative effort to ensure that our diversity is reflected in our K-12 educational system.

I look forward to hearing your response on this very important issue.



AAPI Coalition of WI &lt;wiaapi@gmail.com&gt;

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**Support SB 240**

1 message

**Gaochi Vang** <gfvang@gmail.com>

Mon, Jan 22, 2024 at 10:14 PM

To: Sen.Jagler@legis.wisconsin.gov

Cc: Charlie.Bellin@wisconsin.gov, rep.hong@legis.wisconsin.gov, wiaapi@gmail.com

Hello,

My name is Gaochi and I urge you to support Assembly Bill 232/Senate Bill 240, which seeks to amend Act 31 (from 1989) to direct Wisconsin school boards to include K-12 instructional programs regarding Hmong Americans and Asian Americans. This proposed amendment should be passed by Wisconsin's legislature 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 for all students.

I commend the Wisconsin State Assembly Committee on Education for holding a public hearing for AB 232 on May 25, 2023, and on October 10, 2023 for unanimously voting to send AB 232 to the Assembly floor for a vote. This marks a significant milestone in recognizing the vital role of AAPI contributions to Wisconsin's history, culture, and economy. At the Assembly public hearing, over 50 community members and allies provided testimonies. Their testimonies were inspiring about the need for all our students to learn about one another's culture and history.

As a next step, I request that you urge the Wisconsin Senate's Education Committee to support SB 240. This bipartisan legislation will ensure that the heritage and history of Hmong and Asian Americans are given the attention and inclusion they deserve in our public schools, by making a very simple change to state statute (from 1989), which already includes American Indians, Black Americans, and Hispanics.

With the recent surge of anti-Asian violence, it is even more timely to make sure that our state's public education reflects the communities that make our state whole. Whether Wisconsin's school districts have a large or small number of Asian American students, or whether they are in urban, rural, or suburban areas, AAPI-related education will bring our students greater awareness, knowledge, and understanding of the diverse AAPI communities in Wisconsin. All our students will then be 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.

Our children deserve to know their story, the story of their peers, and the story of Wisconsin. It is essential that you champion this legislative effort to ensure that our diversity is reflected in our K-12 educational system.

Sincerely,  
Gaochi Vang



AAPI Coalition of WI &lt;wiaapi@gmail.com&gt;

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**SB 240/AB 232**

1 message

**Pam Her** <pa4hawj@gmail.com>

Mon, Jan 22, 2024 at 10:28 PM

To: Sen.Jagler@legis.wisconsin.gov

Cc: Charlie.Bellin@wisconsin.gov, rep.hong@legis.wisconsin.gov, wiaapi@gmail.com

Dear Senator Jaglar,

My name is Pafoua Her and I urge you to support Assembly Bill 232/Senate Bill 240, which seeks to amend Act 31 (from 1989) to direct Wisconsin school boards to include K-12 instructional programs regarding Hmong Americans and Asian Americans. This proposed amendment should be passed by Wisconsin's legislature 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 for all students.

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Our children deserve to know their story, the story of their peers, and the story of Wisconsin. It is essential that you champion this legislative effort to ensure that our diversity is reflected in our K-12 educational system.

Sincerely,

Pafoua Her, PhD



AAPI Coalition of WI &lt;wiaapi@gmail.com&gt;

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**Testimony**

1 message

**Allison Lee** <allisonlee1609@gmail.com>

Mon, Jan 22, 2024 at 10:32 PM

To: en.Jagler@legis.wisconsin.gov, Charlie.Bellin@wisconsin.gov, rep.hong@legis.wisconsin.gov, wiaapi@gmail.com

January, 22nd, 2024

Allison Lee

508 Laurel Lake Rd.

Thiensville, WI 53092

Dear Mr. Jagler,

My name is Allison Lee and I am an 8th grader at Steffen Middle School in Mequon. As a member of the Asian American community here in Wisconsin, I feel as if it is of the utmost importance that students should learn about not only the history of other cultures but ours as well. Ever since I started school we have not had a lot of opportunities to learn about our home countries despite the large Asian demographic. This forced me and many others to go to separate institutions which cost hundreds of dollars a year and not everyone is fortunate enough to be able to afford it. I think that just like our peers of other races, we should be able to learn about our culture for free in school. Since people are not fully educated about Asian cultures in school, we tend to be discriminated against by others. This is especially magnified because of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 where Asian Americans received a lot of hatred due to rumors and stereotyping. I believe that we can improve this problem by enlightening more people on the history and culture of Asian Americans and Asia in general.

Thank you for your consideration,

Allison Lee



AAPI Coalition of WI &lt;wiaapi@gmail.com&gt;

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**Senate Bill 240, Cai Testimony**

1 message

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**Emily Cai** <ec06141020@gmail.com>  
To: wiaapi@gmail.com

Mon, Jan 22, 2024 at 10:42 PM

January, 22nd, 2024

Emily Cai

2726, West Woodfield Dr

Mequon, WI 53092

Dear AAPI coalition of Wisconsin,

My name is Emily Cai, and I am in eighth grade at Steffen Middle School. You must say yes to Senate Bill 240 for a multitude of reasons. Growing up, I never heard about Asian American and Hmong history through school. The only exception was a brief China unit in sixth grade. I feel as if Asian American culture is underrepresented in our educational curriculum. Throughout American history, Asian Americans have made immense contributions in building our country. It is only fair for all this history to be taught in school. I hope that my school curriculum will soon appropriately teach Asian history. If this is not taught properly, future generations will not understand Asian history and its contributions to America. In school, we ignore how unfairly Asians were treated in the past, and recently, during COVID-19. Asian history must be taught in our school curriculum not only to learn about its contributions to America, but to also give us fair rights. We must learn about Asian history so as to not repeat the bad parts ever again. If we don't, an unwelcome stereotype will forever follow Asian people around, but we can start by changing that here and now.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Emily Cai



AAPI Coalition of WI &lt;wiaapi@gmail.com&gt;

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**Written Public Testimony for SB 240/AB 232**

1 message

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**Angelina Xiong** <xiong.pajnrasa1237@gmail.com>  
To: Sen.Jagler@legis.wisconsin.gov  
Cc: rep.hong@legis.wisconsin.gov, wiaapi@gmail.com

Mon, Jan 22, 2024 at 11:27 PM

Hello, my name is Paj Nras Xiong, and I am a junior at University School of Milwaukee. I am writing to express my strong support for the passage of Assembly Bill 232.

I typically go by my middle name, "Angelina," for the convenience of those who find my given first name challenging to pronounce. This small adjustment reflects a broader issue that has personally affected me as an Asian American, specifically as a Hmong American. Having a name in a language unfamiliar to many has influenced my perception of self and family names. It becomes even more apparent when comparing my cultural background to that of my classmates, whose histories are acknowledged while mine requires intentional exploration into Asian-American history.

On a more personal note, being Hmong sets me apart, and I take pride in my heritage. Yet, there are moments when I wish I could be perceived as "normal" – a notion often shaped by stereotypes perpetuated by mainstream culture. The lack of education on Hmong-American and broader Asian-American history contributes to gaps in understanding, particularly in the minds of young Asian Americans.

It's not about placing Asian-American children on a pedestal but about ensuring that all children, regardless of their background, have access to an inclusive education. The future of our country should be shaped by fully informed and engaged individuals. My thoughts often turn to my younger siblings, with much to learn and live for. I wish for them, and every child, to feel included in history classes, free from discomfort.

Assembly Bill 232 provides an opportunity to bring about positive change, not just for Asians but for students of all backgrounds. I urge you to pass this bill for the betterment of society's future. Thank you.

January 22, 2024  
Xiaoying Lin  
1001 S Main St, Racine, WI 53403  
Gateway Technical College

Dear members of the Senate Committee on Education,

My name is Dr. Xiaoying Lin. I'm writing to strongly urge you to pass Senate Bill 240. 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





AAPI Coalition of WI &lt;wiaapi@gmail.com&gt;

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**Senate Bill 240**

1 message

**Alexander Chen** <alexynchen@gmail.com>

Mon, Jan 22, 2024 at 11:58 PM

To: Sen.Jagler@legis.wisconsin.gov

Cc: "wiaapi@gmail.com" &lt;wiaapi@gmail.com&gt;, Charlie.Bellin@wisconsin.gov, rep.hong@legis.wisconsin.gov

Dear Mr. Jagler,

My name is Alex Chen. I am a sophomore at the University School of Milwaukee. I'm writing to strongly implore you to vote YES for Senate Bill 240.

As a Chinese American, this bill is very important to me as an Asian person, but also as an American citizen. The inclusion of Asian American and Hmong history in schools is very important to all people in America. Their history has affected American history in many different ways, and the exclusion of their history eliminates part of American history. The American race is one that includes all races, including Hmong and Asian people. If their history was incorporated into the school curriculum, it would allow their voices to be heard. Right now, their voices are restricted because of the minimal representation they have in America. The addition of Hmong and Asian American history would provide more opportunities for representation. Once this is done, the American race can finally be completed with the inclusion of all races.

Please vote YES!

Sincerely,

Alex Chen

May 23, 2023

Raymond Yang

11404 North Country View Drive

Mequon, WI 53092

Dear Mr. Jagler,

My name is Raymond Yang, and I am a freshman from the University School of Milwaukee. I write this letter to you in order to strongly support the belief that Senate Bill 240 should pass, and that you could help it pass by voting "aye."

As someone who grew up in the Mequon Thiensville School District, I was fortunate enough to divulge into several different Native American, Black, Japanese-American, and Jewish topics, spanning thousands of years. However, I found that from the years of education that I had gone through, there was never once a time where they taught Asian American history. The inclusion of different heritage groups in curriculum is essential to a broader general understanding of society, and although east Asian history has been covered through early civilizations, there is a great absence of it in recent history. The different ways in which teachers communicated the racial inequalities that were widely prevalent in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that are so emphasized in our curriculum are generally not applied to Asian Americans, and are rarely covered over the course of the educational system.

A general problem with the exclusivity of this method of education is that it leaves out a diverse group of people, and leaves out a significant portion of people. These people who live in America however, do not receive the same attention that they do from people who suffered from past experiences. From topics in American history such as Manifest Destiny and the Jim Crow Laws to the Holocaust and the Japanese concentration camps, these events in history help students gain a deeper understanding of their society. The lack of inclusion of the majority of a diverse group of people can lead to startling differences in the way that we view such people, and exclude a distinct group of people that also deserve to be adequately represented in society

One such instance where the lack of representation has led to a general misunderstanding of the people around them stems from the way in which different methods of expression have painted a sometimes incomplete and/or biased idea of who they are, which is then generalized to everyone. A common example of this is shown through the racism of certain civil movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A notable instance where this has directly influenced my life in a negative manner was the way in which the use of racially motivated phrases directed at me such as encouraging me to "go back to China," or to "eat

your dog.” On top of this, certain instances of violence committed have affected my family friends, who were physically rashly treated in daily life.

The idea that Asian American people and their role in society have a certain degree of similarities to the roles of other ethnic groups in society make it vastly more impressionable that the exclusion of such ethnic groups have contributed to hateful and racially motivated speech. The skewed manners that we are treated in society have propelled certain stereotypes about our traditions and physical attributes, and have led to negative effects within our community, and dissuade inclusion of such ethnic groups, which greatly decreases the ethnic diversity of them.

However, the inclusion of Asian American history in public school curriculum will massively contribute to the equality between such ethnic groups, and will also help to bring down the levels of hate, racially motivated speech, and violence committed against such ethnic groups.

Thank You,

Raymond Yang



AAPI Coalition of WI &lt;wiaapi@gmail.com&gt;

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**SB 240**

1 message

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**Kouser Yang** <kouseryang@gmail.com>

Tue, Jan 23, 2024 at 12:26 AM

To: "Sen.Jagler@legis.wisconsin.gov" &lt;Sen.Jagler@legis.wisconsin.gov&gt;

Cc: "Charlie.Bellin@wisconsin.gov" &lt;Charlie.Bellin@wisconsin.gov&gt;, "rep.hong@legis.wisconsin.gov"

&lt;rep.hong@legis.wisconsin.gov&gt;, "wiaapi@gmail.com" &lt;wiaapi@gmail.com&gt;

Hello,

My name is Kouser Yang and I urge you to support Assembly Bill 232/Senate Bill 240, which seeks to amend Act 31 (from 1989) to direct Wisconsin school boards to include K-12 instructional programs regarding Hmong Americans and Asian Americans. This proposed amendment should be passed by Wisconsin's legislature 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 for all students.

I commend the Wisconsin State Assembly Committee on Education for holding a public hearing for AB 232 on May 25, 2023, and on October 10, 2023 for unanimously voting to send AB 232 to the Assembly floor for a vote. This marks a significant milestone in recognizing the vital role of AAPI contributions to Wisconsin's history, culture, and economy. At the Assembly public hearing, over 50 community members and allies provided testimonies. Their testimonies were inspiring about the need for all our students to learn about one another's culture and history.

As a next step, I request that you urge the Wisconsin Senate's Education Committee to support SB 240. This bipartisan legislation will ensure that the heritage and history of Hmong and Asian Americans are given the attention and inclusion they deserve in our public schools, by making a very simple change to state statute (from 1989), which already includes American Indians, Black Americans, and Hispanics.

With the recent surge of anti-Asian violence, it is even more timely to make sure that our state's public education reflects the communities that make our state whole. Whether Wisconsin's school districts have a large or small number of Asian American students, or whether they are in urban, rural, or suburban areas, AAPI-related education will bring our students greater awareness, knowledge, and understanding of the diverse AAPI communities in Wisconsin. All our students will then be 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.

Our children deserve to know their story, the story of their peers, and the story of Wisconsin. It is essential that you champion this legislative effort to ensure that our diversity is reflected in our K-12 educational system.

Sincerely,  
Kouser Yang

My name is Deepak Jonnalagedda, I'm a proud Indian American living in Madison. I'm here to testify in favor of SB 240 the Hmong and Asian American Education bill.

My family immigrated to the United States in 2003. We chose to be Americans because of the values this country represented, freedom, equality and the right to self determination to name a few. We also chose this country because of the public education infrastructure, that sets up it's citizens to succeed. Which is why I was delighted to hear that there is a bipartisan effort to include Hmong and Asian American educational curricula in our schools.

I believe directing school boards to provide instruction on Hmong and Asian Americans will greatly benefit our youngest citizens.

Asian Americans have lived and worked in Wisconsin for over 100 years, and played a vital part in American history. If young Asian American students to learn more about this, they would feel an increased sense of national pride, and feel more empowered to contribute the future success of our nation.

I also feel instruction on Hmong and Asian Americans will help all students succeed in the modern global marketplace. It is increasingly common for the modern worker to have to interact with people across the world. I used to work as a software engineer at AT&T, in my role I would have to work with consultant teams in India, China, Japan, Korea and many other parts of Asia. Having an increased cultural awareness and a better knowledge of Hmong and Asian history would be a great value add for Wisconsin students, and American businesses competing in the global marketplace.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



## Wisconsin Senate Public Hearing; Testimony for SB 240 on January 23, 2024

Thank you Chair John Jagler, Vice Chair Romaine Quinn, and Legislative members of the Wisconsin Senate's Committee on Education, for bringing the proposed SB 240 bill forward to this public hearing.

My name is Laura Lahti, I am a resident of Fitchburg and Founder of AMASIAN. The AMASIAN organization is dedicated to fostering professional growth, cultural exchange and leadership development within the Asian American community. As a transracial adoptee, growing up in the suburbs of Saint Paul, Minnesota I knew very little about AAPI communities and cultures. Just IMAGINE that ALL the children had the opportunity to learn about Hmong and Asian American history. I see so many positive attributes, and this is why...

**Diverse Perspectives:** Enriches the educational experience by offering diverse perspectives. It allows students to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the state's cultural tapestry and the contributions of various communities.

**Cultural Awareness:** Education plays a crucial role in fostering cultural awareness and understanding. Students can develop a greater appreciation for the rich cultural heritage of these communities, promoting tolerance and reducing stereotypes.

**Community Recognition:** This recognition fosters a sense of belonging among Asian communities and contributes to a more inclusive and united society.

**Global Perspective:** In an increasingly interconnected world, understanding different cultures is essential. Provides students with a global perspective, helping them navigate an increasingly diverse and interconnected global community.

**Empowerment:** Incorporating the stories and achievements of Hmong Americans and Asian Americans can empower students from these communities. Curriculum can inspire pride and motivation, encouraging them to pursue their goals and contribute positively to society.

**Promoting Equity:** Educational curricula should reflect the diversity of the population it serves. By including the histories of Hmong Americans and Asian Americans, the curriculum becomes more equitable, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to learn about and appreciate the contributions of various cultural groups.

**Preventing Erasure:** Including them in the educational curriculum helps preserve and transmit these stories to future generations.

In summary, amending Wisconsin's state statute to include Hmong American and Asian American history in the educational curriculum is a step towards a more inclusive, diverse, and culturally rich learning environment. It not only benefits students by providing a more comprehensive education but also contributes to the overall strength and unity of the community. **Thank you, Laura Lahti, Founder of AMASIAN**



## Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 240

Senate Committee on Education

January 23, 2024

Chair Jagler, Vice-Chair Quinn, and members of the Senate Committee on Education, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bill 240, 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 or submit written testimony supporting this commonsense bill.



My family left Vietnam as refugees in the 1980s because we did not believe in the political construct that ultimately took over. As one of the only Vietnamese students in my elementary school, it was clear to me that I was different, and for me to fit in, I had to act and be someone else. In this case, I assimilated to a point where I was embarrassed of who I really was and where I came from.

I now look back and have so many questions.

What if my educators recognized that my **understanding** of language was higher than my ability to speak? What if I had educators who acknowledged my prior experiences and saw them as my strengths to then build upon? What if our schools taught about Asian American experiences?

This bill will set our communities up for the most essential elements of our humanity. These ideas include belonging, empathy, and curiosity. It wasn't until I had the opportunity to be with people who believed in me, people who were curious about me, that I could start to put my compelling "why" I am in education into words. As an educational leader, I want to give every child a voice, so they do not end up being adults without one, or who don't recognize their own. I encourage all of us to know our own stories and find ways to engage in storytelling and "story LISTENING." Our empathy and creating spaces of belonging starts with acknowledging that Asian Americans matter.

I deeply respect educators, communities, and our students. This bill is about HEALING. It allows stories similar to mine to be recognized as stories worthy of our humanity so we can start to do the most important work, which is to heal, to heal by understanding one another in ways that transform our future together. You all get to set that course NOW by making a very simple change to the state statute and start the process for those who have been other-ized to heal with you.

Thank you,



Duy Nguyen