Resolution Supporting the Teaching of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander History at All Education Levels in the United States

Adopted February 2022

WHEREAS, the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA) is the national association of Asian Pacific American attorneys, judges, law professors and law students, representing the interests of over 60,000 attorneys and approximately 90 national, state, and local Asian Pacific American bar associations; NAPABA members include solo practitioners, large firm lawyers, corporate counsel, legal service and non-profit attorneys, and lawyers serving at all levels of government; and NAPABA is committed to addressing civil rights issues confronting Asian Pacific American communities and people of color;

WHEREAS, education about Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders is a powerful tool to combat anti-Asian hate and discrimination that has been underutilized if not deployed at all for far too long.

WHEREAS, for decades now, Asian American history has either been nonexistent or confined to narrow sections of K-12 curricula;

WHEREAS, in 2015, NAPABA issued a resolution in support of ethnic studies and challenging efforts to ban the teaching of ethnic studies; and at the time NAPABA’s resolution stated, “ethnic studies programs promote diversity and inclusion by contributing to a better understanding of the struggles of people of color in the United States;”

WHEREAS, in July of 2021, Illinois became the first state in the country mandating the teaching of Asian American studies when its legislature overwhelmingly passed the Teaching Equitable Asian American Community History Act (or TEAACH Act);

WHEREAS, the TEAACH Act requires schools to add a unit to the curriculum studying “events of Asian American history” including contributions of Asian Americans to advancing civil rights, to government, arts, humanities, to the economic, cultural, social, and political development of the United States.”

According to the law, “the studying of this materials shall constitute an affirmation by students of their commitment to respect the dignity of all races and peoples and to forever eschew every form of discrimination in their lives and careers;”

WHEREAS, in Connecticut, legislation passed, which mandated the creation of curricula to include “Native American studies, Asian Pacific American studies, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and other sexual orientations and gender identities studies, climate change, personal financial management and financial literacy, and military service and experience of American veterans;”

WHEREAS, New Jersey’s legislature recently passed legislation in December 2021 requiring the teaching of Asian American history to be taught in social studies classes in New Jersey public schools;

WHEREAS, there is also movement at the federal level for greater inclusion of Asian American studies via introduction of the Teaching Asian Pacific American History Act (H.R. 2283, 117th), by Rep. Grace Meng;

WHEREAS, the Teaching Asian Pacific American History Act would require grant applications from Presidential and Congressional Academies to include Asian Pacific American history as part of their American history and civics programs offered to students and teachers;

WHEREAS, every year, hundreds of teachers and students attend these academies, which are funded by the U.S. Department of Education, for an in-depth study in American history and civics;

WHEREAS, the Teaching Asian Pacific American History Act, would also encourage the inclusion of Asian Pacific American history in national and state tests administered through the National Assessment of Educational Progress, and promote collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution’s Asian Pacific American Center to develop innovative programming regarding Asian Pacific American history;

WHEREAS, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander and other ethnic studies courses and curricula benefit students and communities, and promote deeper understanding of diversity and inclusion;

WHEREAS, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander studies are a tool to combat hate and discrimination against those communities;

WHEREAS, students benefit from seeing their communities included in curricula and from learning about the history of other communities;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, THAT NAPABA:

1. Supports the development of and inclusion of ethnic studies and Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander curricula throughout all levels of the American educational system;
2. Supports legislation at the state and federal levels to implement the inclusion of Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander history in school curricula, including the Teaching Asian Pacific American History Act;

3. Encourages educators and educational institutions to promote inclusive curricula that reflect the histories and experiences of diverse communities;

4. Authorizes its president, board, and staff to communicate the content of this resolution to its members, affiliates, other bar associations, members of Congress, the Administration, the press, and others to take steps to implement this resolution, as they deem necessary; and,

5. Supports this resolution as a policy position until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.