Dear Honorable Members of Education Committee:

My name is Henan Cheng, Ed.D. and I am a proud resident of New Haven, CT for 13 years. I am currently a faculty member of Teachers College, Columbia University. I have over 15 years of experiences teaching and conducting educational research at universities both in the U.S. and China. Because I am unable to present my testimony in person today, I am writing to testify in regard of State Bill No. SB00359 “Prohibiting the Disaggregation of Student Data by Ethnic or Racial Subgroups in the Public School Information System.”

As a longtime educator and a first-generation immigrant from China, I strongly support the Bill’s original concept of “prohibiting educational institutions or other state agencies from mandatory collection and separation of data from students by subpopulations of national origin or ethnicity.” However, I do have some concerns about the following statement of the current bill “unless … collected uniformly across the entire population of students.” I believe that the entire population shall not be subject to registry of ancestry immigration nation of origin or ethnicity origin. As an educational researcher, I have witnessed first-hand the detrimental effects of mandatory registry of ethnic background by schools or state agencies on young students. During my field work, both in China and in the U.S., ethnic minority students repeatedly expressed their resentment and frustration on how they are forced to reveal their ethnic background at the beginning of school year, before taking exams, or any other circumstance in which ethnic or racial background should not matter. The students asked why they have to always be forced to check off those boxes and being “reminded” as if they are different from other students.

America is a nation of immigrants. We are proud that, as a great nation, we not only recognize, respect, and embrace the diversity each immigrant brings to this country; but more importantly, we are determined to unite ourselves together simply because, regardless the differences in our origins of nation and ethnicity, we are alike in so many ways – we are all Americans!

It is for the above reasons; I believe that the entire population should not be subject to registry of ancestry immigration nation of origin or ethnicity origin. Please modify the bill language as to “No population of students shall be subject to data collection of ancestry nation of origin and ethnicity origin.”

I respectfully ask you to vote for Bill SB00359. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Henan Cheng, Ed.D.
Associate Director and Adjunct Professor
Center on Chinese Education
Teachers College, Columbia University
Former Principal of Southern Connecticut Chinese School
Email: hc2158@tc.columbia.edu