March 7, 2018

S.B. No. 359 (RAISED) AN ACT PROHIBITING THE DISAGGREGATION OF STUDENT DATA BY ETHNIC SUBGROUPS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL INFORMATION SYSTEM.

Good afternoon Co-Chairs Slossberg, Boucher and Fleishmann, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Mui Mui Hin-McCormick and I am a registered voter living in Middletown. I urge each of you to oppose S.B. No.359 as this would be harmful to all of our communities. Prohibiting disaggregation will continue to oppress our underserved and underrepresented communities’. How can we expect positive changes if there aren’t opportunities for those that are less fortunate? Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders are comprised of 48 different ethnicities nationally. In Connecticut we have over twenty diverse ethnic groups represented. There are specific languages, traditions, educational needs, and much more.

I firmly believe that collecting and reporting detailed data for ethnic subgroups are essential in identifying and reducing the disparities experienced by minority communities. The incredibly diverse cultures, immigration histories, socio-economic compositions, and acculturation levels of these groups mean they have distinct experiences and social needs that cannot be seen when they are lumped under one racial category. Without high-quality and detailed data, policy makers, institutions, and providers misunderstand, overlook, underfund, and ignore the needs of these growing and complex communities in policy and program decision making processes.

The model minority stereotype often frames Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) in terms of their high educational attainment and advanced degrees. Did you know that just 1 in 4 Burmese in the United States have a Bachelor’s degree or higher compared to about 3 in 4 Taiwanese and Indian Americans. On the other end of the education scale, nearly 62% of Bhutanese and 50% of Burmese in the United States lack a high school degree, outcomes that are worse than other minority populations. How can you know if we don’t have disaggregated data? You won’t, instead you will hear about or read about the Asian groups excelling academically. Like any other race, AAPIs have those that over achieve, to those that are doing well, to those that are average to those that are struggling. The communities that need help don’t get help if there is limited to no data available. If we don’t disaggregate data, AAPI’s will continue to be overlooked regarding educational needs. Data drives policy, funding, initiatives, programs, resources and much more.

AAPI policy makers, educators, community leaders, health and social service providers, and researchers have historically spearheaded the push for detailed data collection. AAPI data experts and supporters of detailed data know that these claims are misleading and misguided. Such claims unfairly ignore the history of detailed data collection, misrepresent its goals and purposes, and disregard the desires of underrepresented minority subgroups. They also refuse to acknowledge how detailed data has instrumentally enhanced efforts to secure public and private resources to assist underrepresented minority communities in need. Regarding the argument that detailed data are linked to college admission discrimination against Asian Americans, it is important to underscore that Asian ethnicity data collected at the K-12 level are designed to
“support parental engagement in ethnically diverse schools, and to provide better student support services on matters ranging from mental health and suicide prevention to successful college completion.” They are unrelated to elite institutions’ admission considerations. Lastly, those opposing detailed data due to fear of discrimination ironically overlook the fact that any concerted efforts to investigate and combat institutional discrimination and racism rely heavily on having access to detailed data.

Therefore, contrary to those who certain that high-quality and detailed data are critical in ensuring more equitable access and success for all groups. I am deeply concerned by recent efforts in opposing the collection of detailed race, ethnicity, and language (REL) data in our state and elsewhere in the country. I hope this is alarming to each of you as well.

Please vote against S.B. No. 359. I welcome further discussion and look forward to having an opportunity to be part of future conversations regarding race, ethnicity, and language (REL) data.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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