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In opposition: R.S.B. 359
An Act Prohibiting the Disaggregation of Student Data by Ethnic Subgroups in the Public School Information System.

Advocates of R.S.B. 359 would claim that this bill is for me. As the child of highly educated, East Asian immigrants, students like me supposedly have the most to lose from disaggregation. However, as a Yale student who is involved with the Asian American community on my campus, I understand how aggregated data hurts those within the the Asian American community who grew up with less privilege than I did. I understand that my family, and much of my Chinese American community, has had a drastically different experience of the American Dream than immigrant families from Southeast Asia and Pacific Islands. For me, the disaggregation of student data is no threat towards the bright, passionate young people I know in my community. Instead, it’s a measure to add nuance to the way we portray our students, shedding light on the inequities within the incredibly diverse group we call “Asian Americans.”

Growing up, my family and my community repeatedly told me versions of this narrative--stories about other Chinese American students with perfect test scores who were rejected by all 8 Ivy League schools by virtue of their race. Now, opponents of disaggregation are supporting legislation like R.S.B 359 to prevent what they see as an additional burden on East Asian students. Of course, I empathize with the East Asian parents making these arguments. Just like my parents, many of them came to the United States in hopes that their children could make it to a school like Yale. I recognize that it’s a deep love for their children and their communities that is driving their advocacy.

However, we can’t ignore the vast disparities between ethnic groups within the Asian American community. I was lucky to grow up in an upper-middle class neighborhood with well educated role models to help me get to Yale; many other young Asian Americans are not so lucky, a difference that often falls along ethnic lines. The push for disaggregation hopes to recognize the education, health, and income gaps between various Asian American groups. It’s a simple argument--that we can’t treat Asian American students as monolithic because their experiences
are not monolithic. The groups we most commonly think of as Asian American--Chinese Americans, Indian Americans, and Filipino Americans--make up less than one fourth of the Asian American population. The median income for many pacific islander groups is less than a third of the median income for Indian Americans. Recognizing these disparities will help Connecticut schools plan the best interventions for their students and fit programming to serve the needs of each of these communities.

Ultimately, R.S.B. 359 isn’t protecting my American Dream; it’s preventing schools from helping young Asian Americans realize theirs.