My name is Xuan, and I currently reside in New Haven, while originally being from Singapore. I am involved with Yale Asian American Cultural Center as well as a supporter of the Asian American Studies Task Force. I stand in opposition to RBS 359.

While we are all aware nowadays that racialized groupings have no intrinsic biological reality, they nonetheless have an important social reality that cannot be ignored. When it comes to the term “Asian” or “Asian American”, it is clear that this in fact refers to an incredibly heterogenous group of peoples with tremendously vared social and economic circumstances, life outcomes, and immigration histories. As someone who grew up in the multiracial Asian city of Singapore, I can assure you that there is no singular “Asian race”, and that to administrate using those terms is to obscure an inordinate amount of diversity and disparity - an obfuscation that, instead of alleviating ethnic discrimination, will worsen discrimination by hiding its existence. This is true even of a smaller ethnic grouping like “Chinese”, which obscures to huge difference, for example, between myself as a Chinese person who was raised in Singapore, and a Chinese person who immigrated to the US from mainland China.

I call upon legislators to ask what RBS 359 would really accomplish, and what its proponents, Asian American or otherwise, are really hoping for. Many of those who support RBS 359 claim to do so on the basis of preserving unity, whether unity among Asian Americans, or among Americans as whole. Their argument is that by disaggregating data, this may create and sow division along ethnic lines, or at the very least enable discrimination on the basis of finer ethnic subgroupings. What they fail to consider is that more fine-grained data by no means leads to more discriminatory policy. In fact, more fine-grained data is precisely what will allow us to better notice internal disparities within the Asian American population, and to correct for them.
I would also like to draw attention to the fact that most of the proponents making these arguments are, like myself, Chinese - that is, they come from one of the most privileged subgroups among the Asian American population. One of their fears about data disaggregation is that it will affect the chances of their acceptance at Ivy League schools, presumably because Ivy League schools will then start favoring more disadvantaged Asian American subgroups (e.g. Southeast Asian Americans). Not only is it wholly unclear whether this fear is well-founded (if there is discrimination against Asian Americans by Ivy League, it is more likely to be because of legacy admissions policies that favor wealthy white Americans), it also unclear why catering to the elite few who stand a chance of entering the Ivy League should be matter of public interest. By preventing data disaggregation, elite Chinese Americans maintain their own privilege at the expense of the most disadvantaged Asian American subgroups, many of whom came to America as refugees. The marginal benefit of more ‘merit-based’ admission of Chinese Americans to the Ivy League will come at the cost of ignorance of the many disparities that need to be addressed among the Asian American population - a population far larger than the few lucky enough to have a shot at entering the Ivy League.

As someone both Asian and Chinese, and originally from South East Asia, I reject the idea that data disaggregation creates unnecessary division and discord. Rather, my opposition to RBS 359 stems precisely from my commitment to solidarity with Asians and Asian Americans as a whole - solidarity that does not try to erase difference, but to support and empower the most disadvantaged among us. While there are always worries one can have about exactly how fine-grained ethnic data will be used by governments, the data itself is not discriminatory. It is the policies that are based on that data that can either reify disadvantage, or alleviate it. I trust that data disaggregation will largely be used in the latter manner - it is only when we know how large these internal disparities that we will be moved to address them. I call upon legislators not to be drawn in by the seductive ideal of a (false) unity, but to instead work towards our collective welfare in full recognition of our difference and diversity.