Honorable Members of the Connecticut Education Committee:

My name is Yilan Tang. I am 13 years old and currently an 8th-grade student at Avon Middle School. I was born and have been raised in Connecticut for my whole life. I am writing to testify in regard to bill No. SB359 “Prohibiting the Disaggregation of Student Data by Ethnic or Racial Subgroups in the Public School Information System”.

I fully support the 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 am very concerned in regard to this portion of the current bill language “unless … collected uniformly across the entire population of students”.

I believe the entire population shall not be subject to a registry of ancestry immigration nation of origin or ethnic origin. I have lived in the US since the day I was born and have developed friends who don’t see me as any less “American” than those around me.

Being of Chinese descendant in the US has brought a lot of criticism and judgment upon me and my friends. People at school have asked questions such as “Hey, do you speak Asian?”, “Why don’t you take extra English classes because you’re Chinese?” or even “Why don’t you live in China, aren’t you Chinese?”. People have also mocked and judged my friends and me, saying things such as “I got such a bad grade” or “My parents are so strict”. People have also said unnecessary comments such as, “Why don’t you ever wear Chinese clothes?” or “Why are you so good (at a particular skill)?”. Sometimes comments that are super offensive are given as well. Just the other day one of my friends, who is also Asian, was asked if she was going to get deported back to her parents’ home country. Comments such as these have only made me and other Asian students think more about how genuinely American we are. A bill to subdivide Americans would only make us feel more excluded and isolated in this country.

Why have I been called out for being Asian and have been treated differently? Even The Declaration of Independence states that “all men are created equal” and that was written 242 years ago. Why is this still a problem today? Since long ago, America has always been the dreamland. A country of freedom and equality, yet we as Asians still are not treated equally as White people. Why does anyone in our country have to specify where exactly they are from? Why does that matter if we are all legal citizens with the same legal rights? Around 100 years ago, we had this exact problem with African-American and Less than 200 years ago we had this problem with Native Americans and Mexicans. Why is America, the country founded on equality and freedom, still struggling with racial equality?
In Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and New York, our neighboring states, some type of Asian Registry bill has passed or has been raised. These bills have isolated and excluded Asian residents. I am very happy that Connecticut has a bill that is going the opposite direction.

United we stand; divided we fall. We should not have a registry based on national origin or ethnicity for ANY American citizen. Everyone should be treated equally and judged by the content of their character, not where their grandparents came from or what dialects they speak at home.

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”. Please vote for bill SB 359.

Sincerely,
Yilan Tang
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