Dear Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Sounthaly Thammavong and I am a registered voter living in the town of Manchester, CT. I am submitting this testimony to oppose SB 359, which prevents the public-school information system from disaggregating student data by ethnic subgroups. Disaggregation of data is important to understanding that all ethnic groups are not alike and works to debunk the Model Minority Myth that is detrimental to Asian and Asian Americans.

The U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey; Educational Attainment for Asian-American Sub-Groups (2008-2010) found ‘disaggregated data that Southeast Asians have a greater likelihood of dropping out of high school, while other Asian groups are destined to achieve the highest levels of education.’ Collecting detailed data affects all minority groups. By not allowing ethnic subgroup information to be collected you are saying that all minority groups are homogenous and have the same needs across the board, lumping African, Black, Hispanic, Latin and Asian American students in the same category.

By collecting detailed demographic information, the state will see that not all Asian and Asian Americans have equal access to education. As a Lao American I can personally say that I did not have support in secondary education and often served as an interpreter for my own parents because there were no resources available. It was assumed we knew how to navigate the school system, which now troubles me as new immigrants continue to enter the our state, with little to no support. We need detailed data to inform public policy. Similar bills in support of detailed data collection have passed in New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, California and Minnesota.

Some individuals believe disaggregated data would impact their children in college admissions. Collecting detailed data, while maintaining the privacy of individuals, will help us acknowledge educational disparities in the K – 12 systems to help ensure each child has a chance to succeed. Information collected here does not relate to college admission. Those in favor of SB 359 believe that collecting detailed data is ‘discriminatory.’ They ignore the fact that detailed data is used to secure public and private resources to help underrepresented minority communities. Collection of detailed data does not to create a ‘registry’ that echoes the Nazi registry of people of Jewish descent. Detailed data collection will allow us the opportunity to better see where needs are, so resources can be allocated to students who desperately need tools for success.

Please oppose SB 359 and ensure that every child has an equal access and the opportunity to quality education.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sounthaly Thammavong, LMSW
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