Support SB0359
Donald Yan
Ph.D., Statistics
84 Maplevale DR.
Woodbridge, CT 06525

Dear Honorable Members of Education Committee,

I am writing to support bill No. SB359 “Prohibiting the Disaggregation of Student Data by Ethnic or Racial Subgroups in Public Schools Information System.”

As a data scientist, I am opposing the collection of data by students’ ethnicity or race under government policy. In the practice of data collection, two questions of central importance are, what is the purpose of the collection of certain data, and will the collected data serve the purpose? Currently several states made it a law to mandate Asian American students to register their ethnicity or ancestry nation of origin. The supporters of Asian registry claim that there are two purposes for the collection of such data. One is to fight educational inequality. There have been numerous studies on this issue, and the widely recognized finding is that social economic status is the single most important contributing factor of such an inequality. Thus, the data collection should focus directly on factors mostly closely connected to this, for example, economic status, income, occupation etc. Data collected by Asian registry, which is based on race and ethnics subgroups, does not have a direct connection to the socioeconomic status. The collection of such data would be an inefficient use of tax resources. More importantly, the collection of such data has and will cause more anxiety and disturbance among Asian communities. If made as mandate practice to collect this type of data, it would violate the principle of non-invasive data collection. Therefore, the data collection advocated by Asian registry does not serve its intended purpose while causing damages to a wide population of subjects.

Another purpose of data collected via Asian registry, as claimed by its supporters, is to help combat certain diseases among a small population such as the Cambodians. It is widely known that such an association between this disease and the Cambodians (first generation in US) were found three decades ago. It is highly questionable whether such an association still exists, and, more importantly, whether such an association exists among the descendants of those Cambodians. On the other hand, let’s rethink about the purpose of data collection in this context. The purpose is to help fight disease among Cambodians. We already knew the most sensible and efficient solution – just focus the target population (which is the Cambodians). Why still wasting resources in exploring clearly inferior solutions and collecting data from other ethnic groups?

Therefore, it is fundamentally wrong to mandate any American students to register their ethnicity or race. Please modify the current bill language “unless … collected uniformly across the entire population of students”, to “no population of students shall be subject to data collection of race and ethnicity”.

Thank you for reading my testimony.

Sincerely,

Donald