Dear Members of the Education Committee,

My name is Joliana Yee and I am a voter living in the town of Norwalk, CT. I am submitting this testimony in opposition of SB 359, which prevents the public school information system from disaggregating student data by ethnic groups. As an advance degree holder and educator who has worked at various public and private institutions of higher education, the ability to access disaggregated data on Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) populations (and any racial minority population for that matter), look at data in subgroups by race and ethnicity is critical to developing accurate understanding of outcomes and effective interventions to improve negative outcomes.

The language in SB 359 would limit our state’s ability to disaggregate data to two conditions: 1) if it is federally mandated or 2) if the data is uniformly collected for all ethnic subgroups for all students in the state. Connecticut should have the choice to disaggregate data in a manner that makes sense for our unique needs. SB 359’s first condition subjects our state choice to federal mandates. SB 359’s second condition creates an impossible standard and thus prohibits disaggregating data, since data is currently not collected from all students in the state (i.e. home schooled and private school students). Our state has a right to our own collected data, and we should retain a choice in how it is aggregated. These limits remove Connecticut’s ability to choose how to aggregate our community data.

Numerous research findings have shown that there are critical differences in life chances among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders that track by detailed origin. Thus, data disaggregation is critical to understanding the needs of our diverse AAPI population. This is true, not only for national-level data collections such as the U.S. Census and American Community Survey, but also with respect to state and local data collections. More accurate data helps to prevent inaccurate stereotypes about Asian American groups and the potential for policies to reflect these faulty stereotypes. State and local data collections of detailed Asian origin are critical to fill these gaps, and to help formulate and implement policies that benefit local populations. It is also critical that such data be collected and disseminated in a manner that protects individual privacy and ensures data security, consistent with safeguards on other types of state and local administrative and survey data collections.

For the last three decades, Asian American & Pacific Islander community leaders, elected officials, researchers, educators, and students have called for more, not less, information on AAPIs. The call for detailed data emerged most powerfully after 1965, when the United States ended its restrictive quotas by national origin. As the AAPI community grew, government agencies, schools, and the larger population failed to distinguish between different national-origin and ethnic groups, with distinct histories, experiences, and social needs. This lumping resulted in inadequate recognition of the unique challenges among different ethnic groups in the Asian American population. Lumpking data on AAPIs subgroups together is taking a step backwards. For too long, state and local educational institutions, healthcare providers, and social service providers have ignored and overlooked the diverse needs within the AAPI community. To reject the collection of high-quality, detailed data on AAPIs is to reject the representation of all members of our growing community.

Please oppose SB 359 and ensure that every child has an equal access to quality education. Thank you for your time and consideration.