Honorable Members of Education Committee,

As a Ph.D. consumer scientist who has worked in consumer cognition and perception for more than 10 years, I have seen overwhelming literature demonstrated the un-American biases toward Asian American that can be primed through simple questions such as “do you speak English” or “where you are come from”. I am writing this letter to testify and to strongly support the bill No. SB359 “Prohibiting the Disaggregation of Student Data by Ethnic or Racial Subgroups in the Public School Information System”.

The MSNBC’s headline 20 years ago in the 1998 winter Olympics - “American Beats Out Kwan” vividly illustrated the un-American biases Asian American have experienced. Even Michelle Kwan, who born and raised here, and a five-time world champion representing United States, suffered through the implicit rejection of her “Americanness”. This un-American/foreigner bias may not be explicit expressed due to unawareness of the individuals or social taboo, but can be readily measured by implicit methods such as the one demonstrated in Harvard’s Project Implicit Asian IAT (https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html, an open self-administered test. Among 366,706 tested between 2004 and 2015, about 50% shown moderate to strong association of Asian with foreign).

The un-American/foreigner bias can be reinforced by categorizing individuals based on their ethnic (rather than personal) identify and by drawing attention to the ethnic identify. Study by Devos and Ma in 2008 is one of the examples demonstrated this effect. The study is titled “Is Kate Winslet more American than Lucy Liu? The impact of construal processes on the implicit ascription of a national identity”. Contrast to study participants’ explicit knowledge of Kate’s European and Lucy’s American identity, Lucy was implicitly regarded as being less American than Kate. This bias to view Lucy as less American was particularly stronger after the study participants either completed the task to categorize the actresses’ ethnic identity or receive highlighted information about the actresses’ ethnic identity.

Asian American are well aware of the foreigner biases toward them, and is very sensitive toward the identity denial of their Americanness. “Identity denial” in this case is instantiated through questions such as what language one speaks or where one is originally from, reminding threatened group members that they do not fully belong in the group of “American”. In face of such threat, Asian American try hard to dispel this misperception of viewing them as foreigner and reassert their identity as American. A study conducted in 2005 has shown that even for elite Asian American (students enrolled in Stanford University), a simple question of “Do you speak English?” doubled the amount of time Asian American students spent on answering trivial TV show questions to prove their familiarity with American culture. The same questions had shown no significant impact on White students, likely because they have not experienced the identity denial of their Americanness (Cheryan and Monin, 2005).

Other than Asian American, many other ethnic minorities in United States, such as Latinos, also suffer a persistent cultural stereotype of them as foreigners although they consider themselves to be just as American as their European American counterparts. Perceived to be foreigner was associated with less life satisfaction and more depressive symptoms, and was indirectly associated with lower self-esteem via identity denial among of U.S.-born Asian Americans and Latinos (Armenta et al. 2013).

In summary, the foreigner perception and identity denial of Americanness toward Asian American and other ethnic minorities’ is well documented and can be reinforced by categorizing individuals based on their ethnicity/nationality using simple question such as “where do you come from”. This reinforced bias and identity denial will negatively impact the psychological well-being of American-born ethnic minorities.

Considering that effects of foreigner perception/identity denial were particularly strong toward ethnic minority when asking categorizing ethnicities while shows little or no effects on their European American counterparts, I am very concerned in regard of this portion of the current bill language “unless … collected uniformly across the entire population of students”. I believe even the entire population is subject to registry of ancestry immigration nation of origin, Asian American and ethnic minority will be harmed in severity due to the existing foreigner biases toward them. 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”. For the Psychological well-being of our American-born ethnic minority kids, I strongly urge you to vote for bill SB359!
Best Regards,

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List of Key Literature. The actual articles can be provided upon requests.

- [https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html](https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html)