Honorable Members of Education Committee:

My name is CHEN ZHAO, an assistant director of medical genetics and a faculty member of the Genetics department of School of Medical at Yale University. I am writing to testify in regard of bill No. SB359 “Prohibiting the Disaggregation of Student Data by Ethnic or Racial Subgroups in the Public School Information System”.

I 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, we are very concerned in regard of 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 registry of ancestry immigration nation of origin or ethnicity origin.

I am supporting the original concept that student ethnic or racial subgroups shall not be collected under any circumstance. I believe that disaggregation of student data by ethnic or racial subgroups will not only add substantial unnecessary and laborious work to State officer and staffs, but also prove itself as a failed action for other frequently advertised applications such as in the medical field. Supporters of the racial and/or ethnic disaggregation act often quoted that additional classified ethnic data can be used for better and accurate patient care in clinics because different ethnic groups differ significantly in their genetic information. I have 10 plus years experience in interpreting genetic testing result and based on my experience other than a few genetically distinct ethnic groups including Ashkenazi Jew and Amish population in the US, most other ethnic groups would not clinically benefit from submitting additional information regarding their ancestral ethnicity. This is because that unlike the two ethnic groups as mentioned above, most ethnic groups in the US were not subject to restrictive breeding options based on religious or geological concerns in the past. As a result of interethnic/interracial marriage, other than a few handful conditions the genetic information of individuals from major ethnic groups in the US is often mixed and does not present uniqueness by its ancestral identity. Even for the few conditions that genetic differences may exist between sub-ethnic/sub-racial groups, diagnosis can be made based on clinical manifestations and genetic information would not add additional value for disease diagnosis or management. In summary I feel that disaggregation of student data by ethnic or racial subgroups in the public school information system for other uses such as in medical field will be both expensive and inefficient.

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 SB359.
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