



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Asian American Commission

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## Minutes Draft

April 28, 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm

**Zoom:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85004025703?pwd=VlkyMUVaK1pZNY9Zc3VnNVVzRCtPQT09>

\*Please note this meeting will be recorded

Meeting will be held via teleconference in compliance with the Governor's Executive Order on the Open Meeting Law and COVID-19

Commissioners: Chair Hyun, Commissioner Kim, Commissioner Douangmany Cage, Commissioner Chiemruom, Commissioner Saksena, Commissioner Lee, Commissioner Solar, Commissioner King, Commissioner Bae Kupel, Commissioner Syeda, Commissioner Prasad, Commissioner Bharath

Staff: Yasmin Padamsee Forbes, Sarah Lin, Sheila Vo

Members of the Public: Paula and Paul, Trisha An Obsequio, Mai Du, Shaw Wang, Rep Erika Uytterhoeven, Vivian Tseng, Dawn Wang, Hua Wang, Yvette, Ben Xia, C.N. Lee, Chelsey Patriss, Billy, Nathan Chun, Kelene Blumstein, Yayin He, Jaely Pereira, Lingya, Peter Kiang, Dawn Wang, Emily Sun, Mandy Sun, Yayin He, Yvette, Cara Lew, Jaely Pereira, Janrey Javier, Josephine Kim, Katie Yue-Sum Li, Mandy Sun, Peter Kiang, Rosa Fernandez, Trisha An Obsequio, Thomas Tran, Mandu Sun, Billy, Hewon Hwang, Kira Mathiesen, Paul Lee, John Li, Davida,

The meeting is recorded.

Attachments:

- NIL

### Call meeting to order

Chair Hyun called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm

### Meeting Minutes – NIL

Chair Hyun acknowledges the open meeting issue. Chair Hyun clarifies that AAC can advise

### 1. Introduction of H.584/S.365 - An Act relative to anti-racism, equity and justice in education

- **Deliberation (25 mins)**

Commissioner Douangmany Cage expresses appreciation for community organizations that have organized behind this bill.



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Asian American Commission

Commissioner Bae Kupel expresses thanks. Wants to acknowledge the deep organizing and advocacy of many community members who are on the call.

Commissioner Lee asks for clarification on the background on this bill. Thanks community for the spirit of participation.

Commissioner Kim shares that the Government Affairs subcommittee backed the bill unanimously. Also has been a topic of discussion in the Anti-Asian Racism Advisory Committee.

Chair Hyun invites Mai Du to give background on the bill. Rep Uterhoeven is one of the legislative sponsors of the bill.

State Representative Uterhoeven: Thanks for the opportunity to speak on the bill. The increase in anti-Asian racism and the death of George Floyd has raised the importance of dismantling white supremacy and racism in the education system. There have been a number of changes at the local level for curriculum and professional development, including school districts like Boston. Teach these issues in a way that centers and uplifts communities of color. From seeing the on-the-ground experience of youth of color and educators of color, that led to the culmination of this bill being filed.

Bill came from the community - a united and diverse community. Leaders in academia, education, teachers union, community, many young leaders are present. Other nonprofits like Sociedad Latina, Northamerican Indian Center of Boston, school committees, educators, from urban areas and suburbs. From very early, when there was interest to file the bill. Community members worked with Senator Jason Lewis to file the bill. State Rep Nika Elugardo was the co-sponsor on the House side. This grassroots coalition helped shape and craft the language for the bill. Mai states that they're also working to get funding for the bill, not just the legislation -- to ensure that the commission has resources to do that work.

Commissioner King states that she attended the Gov Relations subcommittee two weeks ago, and they discussed 7 bills. The bill pertaining to ethnic studies piqued her interest because she used to teach ethnic relations and multiculturalism. She asked commissioners how to get in touch with Senator Jason Lewis

Commissioner King cited issues with lines 52 and 53: (ii) Ensure that ethnic studies, racial justice, decolonizing history, and unlearning racism is taught at all grade levels using a critical approach and pedagogy that is age-appropriate.



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Asian American Commission

Chair Hyun responds that his understanding is that the way that ethnic studies is taught is with a racial justice lens that moves away from a white Eurocentric lens. Ensure that we're working to avoid it.

Commissioner King says that if you can't speak in simple terms, then it is obfuscating the facts. Asks if critical race theory will be part of the pedagogy.

Commissioner Kim comments that the legislation would establish a commission to answer the many important questions. Nothing in the legislation suggests that there would be a particular curriculum or pedagogy used.

Commissioner King states that it appears that critical race theory is underlying this legislation.

Commissioner Kim states that critical race theory is not listed in the language of the legislation.

Commissioner Prasad affirms Commissioner Kim's comment that this is the first step to advance ethnic studies in the Commonwealth, by supporting the establishment of a commission to explore these issues. Commissioner Prasad cites her experience growing up in the school system, we need to make sure that our history is accurate and inclusive.

State Rep affirms Commissioners Kim and Prasad's points and notes specifically that CRT isn't mentioned in the bill. The commission will work to explore these questions around curriculum and pedagogy. The state legislators explicitly decided to not mention specific curriculum by name, as to allow a broader public commission - including community leaders, superintendents, and other public bodies - to help inform and decide these issues. Goal of the commission is to work alongside school and district leaders to inform these critical issues.

Commissioner Bharath thanks Rep Uytterhoeven for introducing this bill. Cites her experience serving as Chair of the Hopkinton School Committee. Commissioner Bharath expresses support for the bill, and asks in terms of process whether the AAC helped file the bill -- and why the AAC is voting on this bill.

Chair Hyun states that one of the functions of the AAC, in our bylaws, is to advise legislative bodies on the impact of legislation pertaining to the AAPI community specifically. Also, the AAC is listed in the legislation as one of the proposed representatives that would have a seat on this commission. He states that for these reasons, it's important to notify legislators where the AAC stands on the issue and hear from the public about this bill.



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Asian American Commission

Commissioner Bharath asks how much time is appropriate to respond and seek public input before voting.

Chair Hyun states the members of the public body does their due diligence and it has come before the AAC via the AAC's subcommittees.

Commissioner King clarifies that this was the first time this bill was introduced to the full Commission.

- **Public comment and discussions (15 mins)**

Chair Hyun states we will move to the public comment period. Chair Hyun welcomes youth leaders Mandy Sun, Trisha An Obsequio, Billy, and Emily Sun of Care for Youth Coalition to offer their prepared presentation.

Bill intends to combat anti-Asian racism and growing hate crimes through education. School curriculums do not reflect the history, culture, and experience of Asian Americans and other BIPOC communities. It's very important to learn about these histories and ensure that our experiences will not be overlooked. This bill ensures that we're prioritizing the mental health of our students. They ask the AAC to support the bill.

Chair Hyun thanks Mandy, Trisha, Bill, and Emily from Care for Youth Coalition for sharing this presentation with us

Peter Kiang, professor at UMass Boston Amherst, cites hearing from current and previous students around issues of Asian American studies, and expresses deep concerns about the lack of any mention of Asian American history voices or experiences in the existing K-12 social studies curriculum. The policy that became practice was the absence of Asian American experiences. Dr. Kiang notes that the Commission took a position on this issue in 1986-1987, and he urges the AAC to do so again today.

Chair Hyun thanks Professor Kiang for offering this very helpful guidance and historical context.

Dr. Josephine Kim states that as an Asian American educator for 20 years, she studied Black and African American history because that is the responsible thing to do. We deserve to ensure that this also happens for the Asian American community, and that our stories and experiences are taught and learned.

Vivian Tseng shares that as an Asian American parent whose children grew up without Asian American history and education in their schools, it is very lonely and no other Asian



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Asian American Commission

American student should grow up in the MA school system being denied representation and their cultural history.

Shaw Yang agrees with Vivian and mentions that his three daughters did not learn about Asian American history in the school system. He also mentions that there is so much disinformation and racial bias, and we need to ensure that all children know the real history so that they are more immune to disinformation and extremism.

Professor C.S. Lee, faculty and director of the Asian American Studies program at UMass Amherst. He cites that “critical approach” in the legislation would give young people critical and detailed knowledge about groups that have been historically marginalized and oppressed. For young people of color, they would be able to see the strength and important contributions of their community.

- **Vote on H.584/S.365**

Chair Hyun welcomes a motion for the AAC to support An Act relative to anti-racism, equity and justice in education

Motion: Commissioner Prasad, Second: Commissioner Kim

Commissioner Bharath thanks everyone for coming today to discuss this important topic. She cites a past experience in which a white male teacher proposed to students doing a role-play experiment of the caste system in which people were. She sees the bill as the first step that is absolutely needed. She asks that we expand the understanding of the word Asian to Sri Lankans and all 48 countries are represented in it. And there is so much diversity within the AAPI community. Second, Commissioner Bharath states that the AAC should reach out to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, but she has not heard back from the Commissioner yet. And we should hear from student voices directly, not just today. We also need to make sure that superintendents and school committee members are listening. Third, she cites Sr Associate Commissioner Dr. Ventura Rodrigues at DESE who is working to diversify the educator pool and this should be an important piece of tackling this issue.

Commissioner King states that we need an education bill in which the rich diverse histories are taught without a divisive, harmful approach. She has always advocated for teaching ethnic studies, and it should foster understanding of other cultures. She is concerned that the “critical approach” is far too complex for primary and secondary curriculum, making it inappropriate methodology for K-12 school children. This approach results in a them vs us mentality and fosters bullying and infighting. She is concerned that this critical approach will not appropriately consider the experience of biracial students. She states that unless we learn from history, history will be a prologue. America has become so polarized and we should inspire everyone to tap into their inner angels, not the social construct of race.



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Asian American Commission

Commissioner Lee drops off the call.

Chair Hyun extends appreciation to Commissioner Bharath and Commissioner King for their comments and dedicated participation.

AYS: Commissioner Bharath, Commissioner Douangmany Cage, Commissioner Chiemruom, Commissioner Kim, Commissioner Bae Kupel, Commissioner Prasad, Commissioner Saksena, Commissioner Solar, Commissioner Syeda, Chair Hyun  
No: Commissioner King  
Motion passes.

### **3. Discuss how the AAC can promote the broader issue of ethnic studies, e.g. through programming, collaborations, etc. (15 mins)**

Chair Hyun thanks the community and members of the public for coming forward today to speak, especially given the recent pain that the AAPI community is facing, for example: the Sikh community, the Indian community, the South Asian community, and trans and queer community. Chair Hyun affirms the importance of working to ensure that the AAPI community is heard and prioritized.

Chair Hyun opens the floor for additional comments on other efforts like programming .

Commissioner Bharath thanks Rep Uytterhoeven for introducing the bill. She cites the experience of being a parent seeing through her child's eyes the impact of insufficient education and exposure about Asian American history and culture. She comments how the Education Subcommittee has discussed the importance of having young people come and share their perspectives with the Commission. She suggests that the AAC should speak to the MA Association of Superintendents and MA Association of School Committees, and write to Commissioner Riley to communicate the importance of ethnic studies.

Emily Sun validates Commissioner Bharath's comment about ensuring that young people's voices are included in the decision making process. Teacher training is also important to engage students.

Commissioner King states that a critical approach is appropriate for college students; however, curriculum and education based on immutable characteristics is inappropriate for primary and secondary students. Communicating that they are part of oppressed groups creates division and marginalization. She reiterates concern with lines 52 and 53, and states the importance of being thoughtful with our actions.

Janrey Javier states that he's a first gen Filipino American student at UMass Boston and serves as president of an Asian American group there. He cites the importance of teaching





# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Asian American Commission

the history of the AAPI experience early on, and how critical it is to enable Asian American young people to understand and learn their identity early on. Janrey mentions a number of AAPI organizations working to support the Asian American community across the Commonwealth.

Mai Du thanks the AAC for the support and endorsement of the bill. She aims to support and center the voice of the young people in closing. This group has been meeting weekly to amplify attention for the bill and build a statewide coalition of young people to support the bill and other issues. They are looking to hold a Youth Leadership Summit to learn more about the bill, and learn the skills and discuss action steps to implement in their own communities. Mentioned that the AAC has a Youth Leadership Symposium every year, so perhaps there's an opportunity to collaborate. They are also approaching funders and will be seeking funding for these actions.

Chair Hyun thanks Rep Uytterhoeven, community organizers, and youth leaders for joining in today's meeting.

#### **4. Next Commission meeting: May 18, 2021**

#### **5. Other Community updates & Meeting adjourned 7:30 pm**

Motion: Commissioner Kim, Second: Commissioner Bae Kupel

Ays: Commissioner Bharath, Commissioner Douangmany Cage, Commissioner Chiemruom, Commissioner Kim, Commissioner Bae Kupel, Commissioner Prasad, Commissioner Saksena, Commissioner Solar, Chair Hyun

Meeting is adjourned as of 7:30pm.