

**LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY OF ASIAN AMERICAN INSTITUTE:
ISSUES IMPACTING ASIAN AMERICAN STUDENTS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF ILLINOIS**

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Statement of Interest

The Asian American Institute (AAI) is the region’s pan-Asian nonprofit advocacy organization, whose mission is to empower the Asian American community by utilizing research, education, and coalition-building. Asian American Institute partners with affiliate organizations located in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C.—thus AAI has local, regional, and national expertise with regard to Asian American civil rights issues.

Issues of Concern to Asian Americans and Recommendations

Collection, disaggregation, and distribution of data

Issue: Asian Americans are often seen as a monolithic “model minority” — there is a widespread notion that Asian Americans are doing as well as white students. In reality, when the data are disaggregated (for example, by ethnicity or English proficiency), Southeast Asian American students and recent-immigrant students have more challenges (greater rates of drop-out or push-out, as well as more issues with overall academic performance).

Recommendation: Ensure that data collection on Asian American students is broken down by ethnicity and English proficiency (and other relevant factors), in order to highlight ethnic groups that need greater attention.

School safety and anti-Asian violence

Issue: During Asian American Institute's campaign to ensure that the Senn High School Local School Council did not inappropriately name its sports field after a radio-show shock jock, a young student shared a story concerning racial epithets and physical assault.

Recommendation: Ensure that all school-safety trainings and anti-harassment trainings include a component that incorporates an Asian American focus.

Barriers to enrollment of undocumented students

Issue: Supporters of AAI have intermittently reported instances of public schools seeking to prevent enrollment of non-citizen students.

Recommendation: Ensure that schools understand that students cannot be barred from public-school enrollment based on immigration status.

Disproportionate disciplinary action against Asian American students

Issue: Community-based partners have sought the legal assistance of AAI, based on their perception of greater disciplinary punishment against Asian American students (with specific examples of white students who received less disciplinary punishment for similar behavior). One specific incident that received media attention involved Allen Lee a graduate of Cary-Grove High School.

Recommendation: Ensure that any guidelines concerning disciplinary actions of students also underscore that racial, language, or cultural differences should not be allowed to influence the punishment of Asian American students.

Conclusion

The Board of Education has a compelling interest in eradicating all forms of discrimination (including anti-Asian bias) and its effects on public schools. AAI looks forward to any assistance or leadership the Board of Education can provide to ensure that Asian American students have full and complete access to our public education system.