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Testimony Re: Senate Bill 2910- Asian American History and Culture

Senate Education Committee

May 4, 2022

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Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its support for Senate Bill 2190 and thank Chair Cano for sponsoring this important bill. This bill would require all public elementary and secondary schools in Rhode Island to provide at least one unit of instruction on Asian American history and culture.

Last year, the General Assembly passed legislation that requires schools to provide education courses in African American history in elementary and secondary schools. This proposed bill aligns with last year's legislation by including the study of Asian American history and culture in Rhode Island public school curriculum.

The Asian American community is diverse and the fastest-growing racial and ethnic group in the United States. Rhode Island is home to approximately 17,000 Southeast Asians (individuals who identify with one or more ethnic groups originating from countries in the Southeast Asian region, including Burma, Cambodia, the Philippines, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam). Providence has the eighth highest Cambodian population (8,000) in the United States.

In October 2020, 3% (4,176) of Rhode Island public schools students identified as Asian. The inclusion of Asian American history and culture in Rhode Island public school curriculum can have a positive impact on school climate, student engagement, and academic outcomes by celebrating the identify of Asian students and exposing all students to the accomplishments of the Asian American community.

Schools have a unique opportunity to become leaders in reversing structural racism. Providing culturally relevant and historically accurate education is one step towards this goal.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today.