



Alliance of Rhode Island Southeast Asians for Education
Organizational Testimony in Support of House Bill #HB7036
Apr 29, 2024

To Chair Abney and Members of the House Finance Committee:

As an organization committed to education justice and equity, ARISE stands in full support of House Bill 7036, which is critical to ensuring our youth receive the civics education they need and deserve.

As it is today, civics knowledge is inequitably and inadequately distributed across lines of race and class, as determined by patterns of historically entrenched disenfranchisement. This bill would ensure that students from all backgrounds understand their potential impact as part of a democratic community, promoting a more inclusive and just society.

Civics education equips students with the knowledge of their rights and responsibilities as citizens. It helps them understand how government functions and how policies are formulated, which is essential for making informed decisions as voters and community members. An informed citizenry is less likely to be swayed by misinformation and more likely to engage in meaningful debates and discussions.

Further, we know from firsthand experience that when youth understand the mechanisms of government and civic institutions, they're far more likely to participate in democratic processes such as voting, volunteering, and engaging in local governance. Civics education can motivate students to contribute to their communities and take action on issues that matter to them, ensuring that democracy remains vibrant and responsive.

For these reasons and more, ARISE calls on the full passage of House Bill 7036.

Below are direct testimonies from our Youth Leaders, all of whom are high school students in Rhode Island:

“I think House Bill 7036 should be passed because of the knowledge of our own country’s laws and rights. Sure, we do encounter some of the knowledge that may be taught from other experiences, but some of us don’t really know about the topic as we were never taught the subject. I’ve been educated pretty well during my first year of high school, but I have no information on what civics are, or what the rights and laws in our country have implemented. It’s all unknown to me, and many others.” - Anthony Iech, Pilgrim High School

“I think House Bill 7036 should be passed because it will allow both students and teachers to gain a better understanding of our society as well as the power that they hold in it. Without a comprehensive civics education, our community is at a stark disadvantage. After all, bettering our society is not possible without first understanding the diverse population that it encompasses and the rights and power that it allows us.” - Rebecca Iswanto, Classical High School

“I think House Bill 7036 should be passed because civic education is important for all citizens. After all, we as a democracy have the right to know the issues happening politically.” -Sila Yang, Pilgrim High School

“I think House Bill 7036 should be passed to fund civics and integrate it into curriculums. This is important to me and many other high schoolers because being educated and aware of civics is key in teaching people that the government has limitations and that every citizen has Constitutional rights that cannot be taken away or violated. “ Henry Iech, Pilgrim High School

“I think House Bill 7036 should be passed because we deserve to learn and know about government history and discuss real-world problems.” - Xia Yang, Pilgrim High School