



VA AAPI CAUCUS

Virginia Asian American & Pacific Islander Caucus

PRESS RELEASE

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Virginia Asian American and Pacific Islander Caucus is Disappointed but Not Surprised by the Youngkin Administration's Report on "Inherently Divisive Policies, Programs, Training, and Curricula"

RICHMOND, VA – Virginia Asian American & Pacific Islander Caucus (VAAPIC) joins the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus and Virginia Association of School Superintendents in denouncing Governor Glenn Youngkin's report on "inherently divisive concepts" in schools.

The report was issued by Virginia's Superintendent of Public Instruction in response to Governor Glenn Youngkin's Executive Order 1, which directed his Administration to end the use of "inherently divisive concepts, including Critical Race Theory," in K-12 public education in the Commonwealth.

The Governor's report is nothing but a thin political document masquerading as public policy. We are disappointed that he seems to be continuing his divisive partisan campaign instead of reaching out to policymakers and education experts to develop a plan together to improve Virginia's public education curriculum.

The report announced the Administration's decision to eliminate any existing policy or document with the word "equity" in it and to repeal many education programs that are already helping Virginia students. VAAPIC is concerned that these ill-advised decisions will create four years of confusion and controversies among teachers, students, parents, and entire communities.

*"It is clear that Gov. Youngkin is not only repealing the progress we have made in addressing social and racial inequities in education but is also actively trying to implement regressive policies that are chillingly reminiscent of the era of Massive Resistance," said **Delegate Irene Shin** (D-86th, Herndon). "We cannot, and will not, go back. Virginia students deserve a world-class education and that includes teaching the full and accurate history of our nation."*

While purporting to uphold certain provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Governor's report in effect attacks the fundamental goals of that landmark federal law by labeling any efforts by schools to promote equity as "divisive."

VAAPIC and its members believe that what is truly divisive is this Governor's efforts to politicize our public education system to further advance his bogeyman campaign wedge issue of "critical race theory."

The facts are clear that most books and classes teaching American history do not adequately represent the perspectives of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, AAPI, and immigrant communities. But instead of seeking out these stories to be shared with our younger generation, Gov. Youngkin and his political appointees instead have chosen to whitewash them.

VAAPIC members believe that teaching the complete truth about America's history including the many instances of inequities is a necessary first step toward providing everyone with equal opportunities going forward while acknowledging and redressing past wrongs.

For Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI), this principle is even more important because so many of our stories are completely absent in history books. AAPIs have been in America for centuries, yet few students are taught the full breadth of our rich contributions to the building of our nation.

Similarly, most Americans are unaware of the many dark and tragic incidents that have harmed our communities because those stories are hardly included in public education curriculum.

From explicit government discrimination, such as the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 or the mass incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans during World War II, to the implicit and systemic bias that portray AAPIs as "perpetual foreigners" or "model minorities," our nation has always treated AAPIs as not being fully Americans.

These sentiments continue to this day as so many AAPIs face xenophobia and violence throughout America. Over 10,000 incidents of violence and assaults against AAPIs have been reported since the moment a former president of the United States attempted to paint the deadly COVID-19 pandemic as somehow being an Asian threat.

As the fastest growing ethnic group in Virginia and nationally, AAPIs currently make up 7% of our state's and the nation's population. In some cities and counties, AAPIs make up over 20% of the student population.

At a time when our classrooms are more diverse than ever before, young students should feel safe to share their stories and opinions about diversity and equity issues. To prohibit their teachers from allowing such opportunities is not only cruel, but also counter to the very purpose of public education which is to help raise thoughtful and open-minded citizen leaders.

*“Virginia is very diverse, our history belongs to all of us, and we owe it to our children to teach all of our history so they can learn about each other,” said **Delegate Kathy KL Tran** (D-42, Springfield). “Many Virginians face racism, sexism and being ‘othered’ on a daily basis. Our ability to understand and navigate our present and future depends on our willingness to engage fully and honestly with our past.”*

VAAPIC’s mission is to advance the interest of this community in our state’s policy making process and to help Virginians better understand their needs and concerns. Members of VAAPIC stand ready to work with Gov. Youngkin and his appointees to ensure that AAPIs in Virginia feel represented in every aspect of their lives, not to remain invisible through government-sanctioned programs.

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