



# Anchorage School District

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## Education Center

5530 E. Northern Lights Blvd. • Anchorage, AK 99504 • 907-742-4000 • [www.asdk12.org](http://www.asdk12.org)

February 12, 2024

Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson  
State Capitol Room 30  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Senator Gray-Jackson,

On behalf of the Anchorage School District, we are writing to express our wholehearted support for Senate Bill 131, which requires school districts across Alaska to teach students about the history and contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI). As leaders of the largest and most diverse school district in Alaska, we firmly believe this bill is a crucial step towards promoting diversity, equity, and cultural understanding in our schools.

We are particularly grateful for your leadership and advocacy in championing this important cause. ASD currently serves roughly 43,000 students, over 17 percent of which are Asian American and Pacific Islanders. Nearly 7,400 students across our elementary, middle, and high schools are of Asian and Pacific Islander descent. The impact and contributions of AAPI to Alaska and our city are profound and deserving of recognition through a formal program to educate students.

By supporting Senate Bill 131, we are not only honoring the rich heritage and contributions of Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, but also providing students with a more comprehensive understanding of our nation's history and the diverse tapestry of its enriching cultures.

The history and contributions of AAPI have often been overlooked or left out of traditional curriculum. By including this vital aspect of our shared history in school curricula, we can ensure that future generations of Alaskan students have a better understanding of the incredibly rich history and cultures of Asian American and Pacific Islanders in Alaska.

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*Educating All Students for Success in Life*

Anchorage School Board Margo Bellamy, President

Carl Jacobs, Vice President

Dora Wilson, Clerk

Kelly Lessens, Treasurer

Dave Donley

Pat Higgins

Andy Holleman

Superintendent Dr. Jharrett Bryantt

This knowledge will not only foster representation of the experiences of AAPI individuals, but also empower students to become informed and engaged citizens in an increasingly interconnected world. Research shows that representation within the classroom not only increases feelings of belonging but also supports a positive school environment in which students feel more confident in their abilities and accelerates academic achievement.

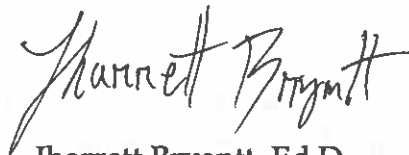
We urge the Legislature's support and passage of Senate Bill 131 this session. By working together to promote inclusive education, we can build a brighter future for all students in Alaska.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Margo Bellamy  
School Board President



Jharrett Bryantt, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

Carl Jacobs  
School Board President

Kelly Lessens  
School Board Treasurer

Dora Wilson  
School Board Clerk

April 25, 2023

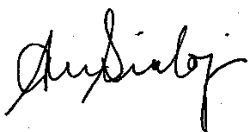
Amanda Sialofi  
3116 Tamworth Cir.  
Anchorage, AK 99504  
(907)310-9996

To the Office of Senator Gray-Jackson:

My name is Amanda Sialofi and I am writing this letter in support of Senate Bill No. 131 (SB0131A) that will provide curriculums and instructions on the history and contributions of Asian American and Pacific Islanders in the United States. I was born in American Samoa but raised here in Anchorage, and I had the privilege of attending Mt. View Elementary school, Clark Middle school, and graduated from East Anchorage High School (aka Betty Davis East Anchorage High School). As a former K-12 student, I can't recall one class in which history that pertained to me as a Pacific Islander and as an Indigenous person of Polynesia was discussed. In fact, it was not until I started college that I started to dive into the rich history of my culture, ancestors, and the colonization of my people and its territories for a project that I was able to learn more who I am and where I came from. Pacific Islanders make up a decent percentage of the student population within the Anchorage School District and it is vital that these students, similar to our Alaska Native/American Indian relatives, are learning about the history that is relevant to them and the contributions that our people have made to the betterment of the United States. As an educator, I have met too many Pacific Islander students who were struggling with their cultural identity and with racial prejudice, education is vital in embracing diversity, identifying shared values, and combat stigmas and hateful rhetoric. This bill will address a lot of those issues while also providing a sense of belonging for students', which in my opinion requires bipartisan support for this bill to be successful.

I appreciate the opportunity to voice support on this matter. If I could be of further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me at 907-310-9996.

Fa'afetai tele lava (Thank you so much),

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Sialofi', written in a cursive style.

Amanda Sialofi

**From:** [Lucy Hansen](#)  
**To:** [Luma Diaz](#); [Joe Hayes](#)  
**Subject:** SB131  
**Date:** Thursday, February 8, 2024 12:15:30 AM

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Dear Representative Elvi Gray-Jackson,

My name is Lucy Hansen, I am one of the Pacific Island Community Leaders and a CEO for a Non Profit Organization in Alaska since 2005. I am writing to express my support for Senate Bill No 131. "To integrate AAPI languages and cultures into the Public School District in Alaska".

I want to thank Representative Elvi Gray-Jackson for the opportunity to introduce this important part of our history to the Senate State Affairs. There is an estimate of 77,366 AAPI make their home in Alaska, they move here for a better future. From 2010 - 2020 the number of eligible AAPI voters in Alaska grew by 46%. This compares to a 10% change for the statewide eligible voting population over the same period.

The growth of our AAPI residents in Alaska in 2010-2020 is 29%, growth of eligible AAPI voters 2010-2020 is 46%, and the AAPI adults who are limited english proficient is 44%. Education is important to all of us, understanding each culture, history, language is essential for teaching children and young adults to appreciate diversity.

AAPI studies must be a part of the curriculum for public schools. Adding this into the school curriculum is critical to change discriminatory perceptions and it contributes toward advancing civil rights for humanity. By shaping the teaching guidelines and resources that will underpin the efforts and play a huge part in determining the students' success.

I thank you for supporting this Bill as it is an important matter to our community and our education curriculum system. I believe that not only all students will benefit from learning AAPI language and culture but it will also reduce discriminatory perceptions through the community at large.

Thank you for your support,

Lucy Hansen  
CEO/Polynesian Association of Alaska

**From:** [Eva Ulukivaiola](#)  
**To:** [Luma Diaz](#)  
**Cc:** [Lucy Hansen](#); [People of Oceania Association](#)  
**Subject:** Re: SB 121 Hearing Information  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 7, 2024 2:23:53 PM

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Dear Senator Gray-Jackson,

I am writing to express my support for the integration of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) languages and cultures into the curriculum of the Anchorage School District. I am grateful for the opportunity provided by your office to address this significant issue and regret that I am unable to speak at the hearing tomorrow due to prior work commitments.

The rich diversity of our community, particularly among families who have migrated to the United States with dreams of prosperity and a better future, underscores the importance of preserving and honoring AAPI languages and traditions. Unfortunately, the implicit expectation for assimilation into American culture and within ASD can result in the immense loss of these invaluable cultural assets. Therefore, the introduction of educational courses focusing on the history and significance of AAPI communities is essential to providing students with a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and accomplishments of Asian and Oceanian Americans.

I firmly believe that such an initiative will not only safeguard AAPI languages and cultures but also cultivate an environment of inclusivity and empathy within the school district. Additionally, the provision of mentorship to AAPI students can significantly impact their academic and personal growth, further enhancing the holistic educational experience.

I thank you for your attention to this crucial matter and sincerely hope for the opportunity to collaborate on advocating for the integration of AAPI language and cultural education within the Anchorage School District.

Thank you for your dedication and support.

Sincerely,

Eva Ulukivaiola  
UAA People of Oceania Association  
***Dena'inaq etnen'aq' gheshtnu ch'q'u yeshdu. (Dena'ina)***

On Wed, Feb 7, 2024 at 1:50 PM Lucy Hansen <[paoaalaska@gmail.com](mailto:paoaalaska@gmail.com)> wrote:

Hello everyone, sorry I have to put your email on this long list. I want to send this to you all if you live in Alaska. This is important to our AAPI community to get our language out to our Public Schools in Alaska to be able to teach the students about our language. If we can call the number below or email your thoughts to the email below, on your reason why its important to teach our language in Public school. Please don't forget, it is tomorrow at 3:30 pm, but you can send email anytime before tomorrow at that time so they can have a better

**From:** [Sasha](#)  
**To:** [Joe Hayes](#)  
**Subject:** Support for SB 131: AAPI curriculum in AK  
**Date:** Thursday, February 8, 2024 4:48:00 PM

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Hi,

My name is Sasha Kramer and I am in support of SB 131. The contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders should be taught widely and celebrated by every Alaskan. I am an Alutiiq Indigenous person, and I am surprised and disappointed that this isn't a requirement already. I would like to see curriculum expanded; to represent the diverse communities that reside within the state of Alaska. This knowledge is beneficial to students of AAPI descent, to build connection to cultural understanding in meaningful, community minded ways. This bill will also benefit those of us who are not of AAPI descent. We must look beyond our own world view and experiences, and understand that our histories and our futures are closely tied. Much appreciation for your consideration.

stay well,

Sasha Kramer



Shayne Nuesca  
10212 Thimble Berry Drive  
Anchorage, AK 99515  
[makeusvisibleak@gmail.com](mailto:makeusvisibleak@gmail.com)

Dear Senator Gray-Jackson,

I am writing to express enthusiastic support for your bill, Senate Bill 131, which aims to bring education about the history and contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders to Alaska's public schools.

I am also excited to share the formation of the Alaska chapter of Make Us Visible, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to advocating for the inclusion of Asian American and Pacific Islander history in school curricula nationwide. Our team includes myself, Shayne Nuesca (interim director), and steering committee members Emily Cho, Young Kim, Kaye Roldan, and Chris Mariano. Since 2021, Make Us Visible has established 24 state chapters and has helped pass similar legislation in Florida, Connecticut, New Jersey, and Rhode Island.

As Alaskans who care deeply about comprehensive education, we believe it is crucial for all students to learn about the diversity and cultural heritage of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) in shaping the history of our state and our country. Many of us don't learn this history until much later in life — when we seek it ourselves. With Senate Bill 131, we are hopeful future generations can know this history sooner, be proud of their culture, and be empowered by this knowledge.

Through Make Us Visible, we can provide research, resources, and expertise on implementing education programs highlighting AAPI history. Most importantly, we can assist in outreach efforts to raise awareness about the importance of SB 131 among community leaders, educators, and the public.

Thank you for your leadership in championing Senate Bill 131. We look forward to working together to ensure its success.

Sincerely,  
Shayne Nuesca on behalf of Make Us Visible Alaska

**From:** [Jeff Chen](#)  
**To:** [Luma Diaz](#); [Joe Hayes](#)  
**Subject:** SB131 Support from Jeff Chen  
**Date:** Friday, February 9, 2024 12:00:12 AM

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Hi Luna and Joe,

Thanks for inviting me to testify today in Juneau on SB131. I'm submitting a transcript of my testimony for the record.

All the Best,  
Jeff

Happy Lunar New Year and Happy Black History Month!

My name's Jeff Chen. I live in Senate District H and House District 16. I'm here representing myself. Thank you, Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson for sponsoring Senate Bill 131, and to Senator Scott Kawasaki for co-sponsoring it. I'm here to testify in support of Senate Bill 131, titled Asian American / Pacific Islander Program.

I'm a third culture kid — it's a term that means I grew up outside of the culture my parents are from. I'm Taiwanese American, and I went to public schools in the 90s and early 2000s. I don't remember being taught any Asian American or Pacific Islander curriculum until I was in college, when I first realized it was even an option.

As a child, we learn behaviors and stories from our families, but school is where we learn about each other. It's where our similarities and differences begin to be negotiated with one another. School is where we meet our first friends and learn from our teachers. It's also a place where the assumptions we have about one another begin to have ripple effects — like being called racist names — or where we are bullied or where we bully others.

As a child from an immigrant family, I just wanted to fit in. At the time, I didn't really care about my own roots, and I know that's a common experience for underrepresented students across the country. Today, I'm proud of who I am and where I come from.

Learning about our Asian American and Pacific Islander histories, cultures, and current affairs is a positive thing I wish I had growing up. Learning about each other and ourselves is important for our identity development, and it builds respect and understanding across race and ethnicity.

As an adult, I've worked with youth on public lands and in schools across Alaska. I've helped bring students to the legislature. I've been in the position to help young people think critically and lovingly about who they are and the communities they come from, and I know that makes a positive impact on youth.

As a journalist and producer, I've helped to tell the stories of Asian Alaskans like Filipino American Representative Thelma Buchholdt and of the thousands of Asian and Pacific Island cannery workers that helped build Alaska's world-class fisheries in the late 1800s and early 1900s. These stories matter when we talk about our histories here in the U.S. and they deserve to be taught. And as painful as it is, it's also important to include legislation like the Chinese Exclusion Act into school curriculum, so students can learn about some of the uglier parts of U.S. history.

In 2022, I received a Rasmuson Foundation award to create a photo exhibit that explores the stories of Taiwanese Alaskans. When this bill passes, I would be happy to contribute the stories, photographs, and videos I've worked on about Asian and Pacific Islander Alaskans to this curriculum. When we intentionally learn about each other, we grow as a community. That's why I support Senate Bill 131.

Thank you!  
Jeff Chen

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**From:** Tess Giant tessolympia12@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Support SB 131  
**Date:** March 11, 2024 at 9:03 AM  
**To:** Luma Diaz Luma.Diaz@akleg.gov

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TG

Dear

Senator Gray-Jackson,

My

name is Tess Ramsey. I

am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 131, an act requiring education in the history and contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

I

have been a resident of Juneau, Alaska

of 6, years and

am a parent of a child in the Juneau School District.

Teaching

Asian American and Pacific Islander history and culture is important because my child should be taught this essential history as it is a part of Alaska's history.

This

is urgent to me because when the history of only one group or select groups, is told, it is erasure of the existence of other people, other histories. Asian American and Pacific Islanders are a vibrant part of our Alaskan communities and deserve a seat at

the table. All children should see themselves reflected in educational materials, not forgotten or tucked away. I want my child to learn about many different cultures and perspectives so that she will have a broader understanding of the world we live in and

the place we call home.

Thank

you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Tess Ramsey

Juneau, Alaska

Gunalchéesh!

Polynesian Association of Alaska  
8060 Country Woods Dr.  
Anchorage, AK 99502  
907-433-9559  
[paoaalaska@gmail.com](mailto:paoaalaska@gmail.com)



Lusiana Hansen  
CEO Polynesian Association of Alaska

March 9, 2024

Reference: SB 131

Dear Senator Gray-Jackson,

My name is Lusiana Hansen. I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 131, an act requiring education in the history and contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

I have been a resident of Anchorage, Alaska of 39 years and am a Parent, Grandparent from the Pacific Island. For 39 years since I arrived in Anchorage Alaska, our AAPI community in Anchorage triple its number each year. Samoan Language is the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest language in Anchorage School District. That means we are here making Alaska our home.

AAPI population growth size in Alaska for 2024 is 84,001 that about 33.5% since 2012. Eligible AAPI voters, 48,658, 28.9% AAPI voter eligibility growth (2012-2022), AAPI citizen voting age population for 50+ about 32.2%, and aged 18-29 about 29.4%.

The importance of Language Access, 55.6% of Asian and Pacific Islanders adults in AK speak a language other than English at home. 31.5% of them are limited English proficient. There are 8 top AANHPI languages spoken in AK, Tagalog (19,942), Hmong (4,800), Korean (3,629) Samoan (3,552), Chinese (1,813), Vietnamese (1,134), Other Eastern Malayo Polynesian language (231) and Chamorro (204).

We know that AAPI is growing fast each year, and therefore it is all important and right for all students to have access of the AAPI history and language add to our State of Alaska Public School curriculum. This is very important to all students to understand and learn about the AAPI culture and language.

Teaching Asian American and Pacific Islander history, language and culture is important because it's what shapes our beliefs and values and influences our behaviors. It will have a more well-rounded approach to the way we engage with other human beings. But it will also pave the way for a new world where we all stand together.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,

Lusiana Hansen  
Anchorage, Alaska  
CEO/PAOA

**From:** [Ann Dougherty](#)  
**To:** [Luma Diaz](#)  
**Subject:** support for Senate Bill 131  
**Date:** Monday, March 11, 2024 4:58:28 PM

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Dear Senator Gray-Jackson,

My name is Ann Dougherty. I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 131, an act requiring education in the history and contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

I have been a resident of Anchorage, Alaska for three years, and the Matsu and Girdwood for a combined five years prior.

Teaching Asian American and Pacific Islander history and culture is important because when we don't learn world history, it's difficult to put in context current events happening. I believe this is important for our kids to learn as much as possible being somewhat remote in Alaska. Plus we have some of the most diverse schools in the country. It's important to learn about the history and cultures of classmates. This will make for more educated and well rounded graduates going out into the world.

Thank you for your consideration.  
Sincerely,  
Ann Dougherty

907-795-7167  
[myoalaska.com](http://myoalaska.com)  
[dougherty-ann.medium.com](http://dougherty-ann.medium.com)



March 13, 2024

Senator Elvi Gray-Jackson  
State Capital Bldg, Rm 30  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Gray-Jackson,

My name is Alma Manabat Parker and I am the Strengthening Cultural Unity Task Force Coordinator and Health Equity Director for the Ketchikan Wellness Coalition. In addition, I am the program director of "Magsayawan (Let's Dance) Ketchikan". I am writing to express my enthusiasm and strong support for Alaska Senate Bill 131, an act requiring education in the history and contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI).

I am a Filipina who has called Ketchikan, Alaska home for 44 years. My family immigrated from the Philippines in 1974 through my father's enlistment into the US Coast Guard. We moved to Kodiak in 1977 and then to Ketchikan in 1980. Currently, Filipinos make up approximately 10% of the population in Ketchikan, the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest minority group following Alaska Natives. The 2020 census recorded that Asians are 6.7% of the state of Alaska's racial composition, of which 4.4% are Filipino. We have a prominent presence in Alaska and make valuable contributions to its growth and prosperity.

All of my elementary education has been in Alaska; I am a Ketchikan High School Class of 1991 Alumni, and I have little to no recollection of learning about historical contributions of Filipinos or other AAPIs within our state. My only connection to my culture was through local Filipino folk-dance classes held at the local Filipino Community Center. Since its closure in 2015, we are seeing a growing absence of Filipino cultural representation in Ketchikan and a fear of youth losing their cultural identity and heritage. To ensure we addressed this growing disparity, I pursued and received funding in November 2022 to revitalize Filipino folk dance and music through cultural enrichment classes through Magsayawan Ketchikan. The program continues to thrive and is gaining momentum, but this culturally centered programming only touches the surface of educating our youth on AAPI history in Alaska.

Through the Ketchikan Wellness Coalition's efforts in health equity and cultural enrichment projects, we are seeing a rebirth to reinvigorate Filipino culture and we are creating platforms to elevate our voices that impact Filipino health and overall wellness. As we see health outreach efforts expand and community member participation and attendance at Filipino cultural events grow every year, I can sense the desire of Filipinos wanting to be recognized and heard, especially amongst the youth. Senate Bill 131 will ensure Alaska's K-12 education system instructs and embraces the historical and cultural significance of AAPI's within Alaska. An inclusive approach to our learning will develop well rounded Alaska residents who will value and respect the true diversity that our beautiful state embodies.

Maraming Salamat for your consideration.

In solidarity,

  
Alma Manabat Parker

March 3, 2025

Senator Elvi Gray – Jackson  
State Capitol Building Room 30  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Senator Jackson:


As Alaska has a very diverse population of individuals of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, including many different Asian American, Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders, Susan and I are very excited and supportive about SB131. Susan was the Executive Director of Bridge Builders in Anchorage for 7 years and I served on the Anchorage Equal Rights Commission for approximately 9 years as well as having been a director of human resources in Alaska for about 10 years. Both of us have been fortunate to have the opportunities to be involved with some of these communities and value both the relationships and the knowledge/wisdom we received from these rich experiences.

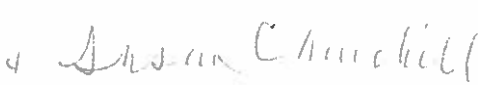
The Anchorage School District is one of the most diverse as established by national surveys. For example, the most diverse high schools are Bartlett High School and Bettye Davis East High School. By providing education regarding these cultures and their contribution to Alaska it will have numerous positive impacts. The two most important is educating all students as to cultural diversity not only in our state but the United States. It will reinforce the importance of the students from the Asian Americans, Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders communities they are part of our history and the future of our country.

We hope individuals from these communities will be included by the educational organizations in creating the course design and content.

Thank you for introducing SB131 this Legislative Session.

Sincerely,

  
Robert Churchill





## Japanese American Citizens League Alaska Chapter

Dear Senators Gray-Jackson and Kawasaki,

On behalf of the Alaska Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), I send our full support for SB 131. I suggest a friendly amendment to the bill: At the end of line 9, please add "and in Alaska" after "United States." Enlightening students on Asian American and Pacific Islander contributions to our nation's history, economics, politics and culture should include an Alaskan focus as well.

For example, the forced evacuation and incarceration of Japanese Americans in World War II was an event nationwide in scope that did not exclude Alaska. Alaskans of Japanese descent were torn from their communities and sent to the internment camps, affecting villages and towns throughout our land. Our students' awareness of this matters.

The list of prominent Japanese Americans and their achievements includes Alaskan Dr. Syun-Ichi Akasofu, a globally recognized pioneer in the study of the aurora borealis and founder of the International Arctic Research Center at the University of Alaska. The list of Alaska pioneers includes Japanese immigrant, Frank Yasuda, who discovered Chandalar gold and founded the community of Beaver, Alaska.

If education means developing broader and deeper understandings, then the more we do to include all of us who are part of our state, our nation and our world, the more we do right by our students. SB 131 is a step in the right direction.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis N. Arashiro", is written over a horizontal line.

3/1/2024

Dennis N. Arashiro  
JACL Alaska Chapter  
Executive Board President