

March 16, 2007 –Committee on Government Administration and Elections

H.B. No. 6002 - AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN
ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN AFFAIRS COMMISSION.

Testimony by William A. Howe, Ed.D. - Glastonbury, CT

Honorable Chairperson Slossberg and Chairperson Caruso, Vice Chairperson Meyer and Vice Chairperson Urban and honorable members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee, Thank you for this opportunity to testify **in support** of House Bill No. 6002.

My name is Bill Howe and I am a resident of Glastonbury. I have been an educator for over 30 years. I am here as a concerned citizen and a parent of two children who were educated in Connecticut.

I have become increasingly concerned about problems faced by Asian American students in this state and the US at all grade levels. We are called the “model minority” but that is a dangerous stereotype because it hides all manners of problems, giving the impression that we have no needs.

Recent research indicates that some, not all, Asian Americans do very well in school academically as indicated by test scores and grades; are less likely to engage in health risk and delinquent behaviors and may therefore not be seen as "at risk."

However, other research indicates that Asian American students experience significantly more depression, anxiety, and isolation and have lower self-esteem and self-concept when compared to European Americans. Asian American students are more isolated, segregated, and socially excluded than European Americans, Hispanics, or African Americans. Asian Americans experience significant racism and discrimination.

- Asian Americans are more likely to internalize their difficulties compared to European Americans; and therefore they tend to underutilize mental health and support services.
- Asian American students are more likely to drop out of school than white students. (19% v 15%)
- Five Asian Pacific American groups have the lowest college completion rates of any racial or ethnic group. (i.e. Hmong, Tongans , Cambodians, Laotians, Guamanians)

In two-thirds of the school districts in Connecticut, the largest minority group is Asian American. We, as teachers and parents try to instill pride in our many cultures as well as good citizenship. Asian Americans have been in this country for over **250 years.**

- Union soldiers of Chinese heritage fought at Gettysburg.
- John Lee from the 14th Connecticut regiment fought at Gettysburg and was killed there. He came from China.
- Filipinos fought bravely for this country in the American Revolution, the American Civil War and every war since then.
- The 442nd Regimental Combat Team made up of all second generation Japanese Americans fought in WWII and has been recognized as the most decorated unit in United States history. A total of 18,000 medals were won by the men of 442nd, including 9,500 Purple Hearts, 52 Distinguished Service Crosses, Seven Distinguished Unit Citations, and a total of 21 Congressional Medals of Honor.
- Japanese American soldiers helped liberate 5000 Jewish prisoners from the Dachau Concentration Camp.

Asian Americans students should be proud of the sacrifice of their ancestors for this great country, but this pride is hindered by the discrimination they face. Coupled with these facts are the mental health and physical problems faced by so many of our community who are refugees and immigrants escaping war and torture in other countries. Our Muslim community, in particular, still suffers greatly from bigotry and hate crimes.

An Asian Pacific American Commission is badly needed to bring our many cultures together, to get them the mental health services and medical care they need, and to give voice to a community of people that just want to be good citizens, taxpayers, and voters.

Thank you very kindly for listening.