

Testimony of Angela Rola
Before the Government Administration and Elections Committee of the Connecticut
General Assembly

February 20, 2008

Good Morning, Senator Slossberg, Rep. Caruso, and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee. I am Angela Rola, Chair of the CT Asian Pacific American Coalition, the director of the University of Connecticut's Asian American Cultural Center at the Storrs campus and a resident of the town of Willington.

I appreciate the opportunity to be heard today in support of HB 5321 An Act Establishing an Asian Pacific American Commission.

Those of us here today in support of this commission will speak of the pressing issues that face the APA community in Connecticut. As an educator who has been working with the Asian Pacific American community in this state for the last fifteen years, I spend much of my time teaching and debunking the model minority myth that plagues our community. Simply defined, the model minority is hard working, never complains, economically and educationally successful, with a strong family structure. While on the surface many of our community members can fit that definition so can members from many other communities. By living under this "model minority" image, real issues facing Asian Pacific Americans are most often glossed over and ignored. Economics, political equality, education, healthcare, glass ceiling issues, and youth concerns go virtually unchecked.

Asian Pacific Americans have also largely been left out of the voting impact discussion until now. The 2006 elections recently showed that in 3 of 33 senate races showed sufficient number of Asian Pacific American voters to qualify for explicit listing. Research shows that APA's have a higher rate of voter turnout than any other group. The sentiment of my own immigrant parents was the importance of their vote.

Asian Pacific Americans are one of the fastest-growing populations in the country. In 2005, according to the U.S. Census, Asian Pacific Americans represented approximately 3.2% of the total population in Connecticut, making Connecticut the 8th fastest growing APA population in the United States. From 2000 to 2005, the APA population in Connecticut grew more than 30%, from approximately 84,000 to over 108,000. We come from nearly 50 countries and ethnic groups, speak numerous languages, practice different religions, and have different characteristics and needs. We live in every county of this state, working in virtually every industry.

The establishment of an Asian Pacific Affairs Commission will assist the State in addressing the APA issues that we raise today and will help engage a diverse group of citizens who contribute to the well-being of Connecticut. I urge you to vote favorably on this bill.

Thank you very much.