

Testimony of Richard Patrick

Government Administration and Elections Committee

February 20, 2008

Greetings Senator Slossberg, Representative Caruso, and members of this committee. I am Richard Patrick and I am an educator in our community college system. I have conducted courses in Asian American and in ethnic studies as well as in American National and Connecticut state government. From that vantage point, I appreciate today's opportunity to share my observations regarding the need for a proposed Asian and Pacific American Affairs Commission, HB 5321.

My presentation focuses on demographic indicators regarding APAs and recent arrivals from the breadth of Asia. From this demographic overview, I will suggest why your support is vital for prospective positive outcomes to the State from an APA Affairs Commission.

Connecticut residents of Asian ancestry are 3.2% of the state's population and increased in numbers by 30% since the 2000 Census to 108,000 from 84,000. By 2015, this group will be more than 134,000. With these numbers, Connecticut will be in the top 10 states which can and should benefit from the impacts and potentialities of this expansion.

The impacts in Connecticut are variable. Hartford and Fairfield counties have had the largest growth of 25% and 35%, respectively, of APAs. Population increases have varied within its diverse constituent groupings. Asian Indians are the most numerous at an approximated 24,208 with a 133% growth rate. Some groups have nearly doubled as with Vietnamese Americans, from 4,088 to 8,271 with a concentration in the Bridgeport area. Of this group, the increase in the Hartford area was from 1,674 to 3,175. Some Connecticut school districts, furthermore, have more than doubled in their Asian students--- as in the Stamford-Norwalk and in the New Haven-Meriden areas.

These numbers point to a basic and central reality: while Asian Americans are in the minority in the state, they nonetheless possess potentialities to more fully benefit the state, its citizens, and ourselves.

The record of scholars who have studied Connecticut's history substantiates that immigrant citizens created businesses and thereby invigorated economies and communities. Connecticut's rise in industry and manufacturing in the 1800's was predicated on energies and talent from abroad. It is well known that there is an entrepreneurial spirit and an industriousness in the cultures of Asians as much as others. 17.4% of the state's Asian Americans presently work in the manufacturing sector, while 12% of non-Hispanic whites do so.

Positive developments from transnational movements of Asians have yet to be more fully capitalized towards sustaining Connecticut's economic engine. An APA Commission

would be instrumental in facilitating state agencies such as Economic Development and others with the federal government's Small Business Administration and elsewhere in securing more start up monies for would-be Asian American entrepreneurs---and thereby also return more tax dollars to the state. To reiterate, transnational Asians have talents and ties with businesses abroad , again toward keeping the state's economic engine at full throttle. 74% or 60, 861 Asian ancestry residents are foreign born.

An APA Commission would be a resource to the legislature, the governor's office, and state agencies with proposals and projects for trade and jobs for Connecticut. In like manner, a Commission would have recommendations regarding labor shortages and needed skills, such as in attracting and keeping physicians and nurses from the Philippines and India and in other areas of needed specialists.

A Commission serving state government could foster further vitality in the state as a public guardian of its APA constituents who are in need of support. 8,000 Asian Americans in the state subsist at the poverty level and lower. The mid-decade poverty rate for them of 5.9% is comparable to that of non-Hispanic whites at 5.4%. Those of southeast Asian ancestry such as from Laos and Cambodia, furthermore, are underrepresented in college graduation for occupational success. As state agencies are guided by Commission recommendations for improved programs, Asian ancestry citizens can have fuller lives as productive citizens and taxpayers.

Thus, support from each of you is vital and appreciated. Your support will result in significant contributions from an APA Commission and from the state's Asian American community to Connecticut and its citizens. Again, thank you for your interest and support.