

Feb. 20, 2008 – Committee on Government Administration and Elections

H.B. No. 5321 - 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 again **in support** of House Bill No. 5321

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 here in Connecticut.

I am hear to destroy the myth that we Asian Americans are all well-educated, wealthy and without any problems. This is a pernicious falsehood that has been used to deny our communities equal access to the rights and privileges that American citizens enjoy.

Some, not all, Asian Americans do very well in school academically. 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.

Asian Americans have been in this country for over 250 years and have earned the right to ask that we be given the same opportunities and benefits as other Americans.

- Asian/Pacific Americans were among the victims and heroes of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001
- Private Jonathan Falaniko, an Asian Pacific American in the United States Army, was killed in Baghdad by a rocket-propelled grenade attack.
- Sgt. Uday Singh, an Asian Pacific American in the United States Army was on patrol in Habbinayah, Iraq when an enemy ambush took his life.
- Over 80 Asian American men and women have died fighting for our country in Iraq including Marine Corporal Kemaphoom A. Chanawongse, 22, of Waterford, CT, originally from Thailand.
- Over 50,000 Asian Americans are in uniform and serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Whether we support the war or not, I know we all support the men and women in uniform who are fighting for an America that tries to take care of its neediest citizens.

Asian Americans students are 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.