

Good evening Senators, members of the Committee my name is Sounthaly Thammavong and I am a board member of The Asian Pacific American Coalition of Connecticut. APAC is a group of individuals who advocate for basic rights on behalf of Connecticut's Asian Pacific Americans. I am also a Case Manager for Asian Family Services.

I would like to thank you in the implementation an Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission. I am here to give my personal plea in order to show that we need continued funding for the 2011 fiscal year.

As part of a lost generation, born to immigrant parents while brought up in the mainstream culture, we have lost our identities in trying to establish ourselves and our new communities. I am hoping what I say can bridge the ethnic diversity that our communities face have while naming the inequalities we endure across the spectrum.

It wasn't until I was in college that I realized due to language barriers that my father may still be alive today. I'll never know if he understood the severity of his condition or understood what medicines he was supposed to take and why. Ethically one should never rely on relatives, especially their own children, to translate medical terminology.

Working in the only Mental Health Outpatient Clinic geared for South East Asian Immigrants and Refugees; I don't see the Model Minority. I see the trials that my own family went through. The population we serve is unrepresented and underserved. I value the work that my colleagues and I endeavor on the basis that we are meeting client needs so they can become self sufficient and productive members of society.

We are in a financially difficult time and 'silent' communities like are own are slipping through the proverbial cracks even faster.

There is limited access to language lines for various Asian and South Asian dialects in the school systems as well as in the realm of healthcare. English as a Second Language classes are only for individuals literate in their mother tongues, which excludes a large number of Asian refugees now flooding into the state that either are preliterate or left under duress having little to no chance for education.

The Commission would support new immigrants by advocating for healthcare initiatives that would help individuals help themselves. To have a healthy society we need healthy citizens which can only happen with education, access to healthcare and housing. The Commission would serve as a liaison between the state and various communities to assess their needs.

Again I thank you for support and please retain the line item funding.