

Testimony opposing the consolidation of the **Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission** and other legislative commissions into a "Commission on Citizen Advocacy"

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Walker and members of the committee. My name is Arlene Avery. I serve on the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission (APAAC), representing Tolland County. I appeal to you to oppose the Governor's proposal to eliminate the Commission on Aging and to consolidate the remaining legislative commissions into a catch-all "Commission on Citizen Advocacy".

The Governor believes this to be a "streamlining", cost effective way to meet the needs of our most challenged communities, but honestly, a "Commission on Citizen Advocacy" could not adequately address the unique and difficult challenges faced by our diverse communities. Connecticut already has the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, an umbrella human rights agency which predates the formation of the legislative commissions at issue. The subsequent establishment of the legislative commissions, including APAAC, affirms the Legislature's commitment and understanding that it is those from within our communities who can best identify and address our complicated challenges.

Asian Americans represent the smallest, but fastest growing racial minority in the state. According to the U.S. Census, Connecticut's Asian American population grew from 95,368 in 2000 to 157,088 in 2010. That's a 65% increase in just ten years!

Our Asian Pacific American communities are varied and many. They include people and their families who came from China, Japan, Korea, Mongolia and Taiwan in East Asia, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Tibet, Bhutan and the Maldives in

South Asia, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Burma, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines in Southeast Asia. Our Pacific Islanders include natives from Hawaii, Samoa, and Guam.

Our communities include many refugees who have secured asylum here, including those from Tibet and Cambodia and persecuted ethnic minorities like the Shan, the Karen, the Hmong and the Lao Lu from Southeast Asia. Our Executive Director, Mui Mui and her family are refugees from Laos.

I have taught English to adult immigrants for many years in Tolland County. About half of my students have been Asian American, including many refugees. My years of teaching English and life skills to immigrants and refugees, provides me strong certainty that the Governor's plan to consolidate the legislative commissions into a "Commission on Citizen Advocacy" will be counter-productive in our efforts to better serve our communities.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts and experience. Thank you for your good work.

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