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February 19, 2013
Appropriations Committee Hearing
Testimony in Support of the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission

My name is Nicole Fink and I am a resident of the town of Brookfield. On February 11, 2009, I sat before this committee as a third year undergraduate student at the University of Connecticut to urge you to reject the Governor's Recommendation to eliminate the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission (APAAC). Today, I again, urge the members of the Appropriations Committee to reject the Governor's proposal to consolidate all the commissions for children and minorities.

According to the 2010 Census, Connecticut's Asian Pacific American (APA) population grew from 95,368 in 2000 to 157,088 in 2010 – a 65% increase. They labeled the APA community as the fastest growing minority population in the state[1]. Since its establishment, APAAC has helped bring awareness and education to the CT State Legislature and community in regards to issues of these 157,088 residents. The Commission has hosted annual Lunar New Year events to showcase the talents and traditions of community groups of the APA community. APAAC has also hosted events to support the many APA-owned small businesses such as a "Cash Mob" at Patel Foods and the first ever APA Leadership and Entrepreneurship Awards celebration.[2] Through these events, APAAC has helped introduce a typically disengaged community into the political arena of CT.

In addition, commissioners have worked tirelessly to fight the model minority myth and bring light to the health disparities the APA community faces, especially in the area of mental health. For example, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention has said that APA women ages 65 and older have the highest suicide rate than any other racial group at 6.5 per 100,000. The CDC also reports that APAs 18 years and older have the second highest percentage of individuals dealing with serious psychological disorders.[3] The commission is the <u>only</u> entity in the state that has compiled culturally competent resources for individuals and is able to direct them to the appropriate services.

Comprised of immigrants from over 50 countries with over 2,000 different dialects, the APA community is unique.[4] The APA needs cannot and will not be met if all of the commissions are consolidated. The concerns that plague the APA community are not just limited to language barriers. The community still has obstacles of unemployment and poverty, contrary to the belief that all APAs are successful. There are also significant education, economic and health disparities. APAs often face a "bamboo ceiling," where the stereotypes that APAs are quiet, hardworking, family-oriented, high achieving in math and science, passive, non-confrontational, submissive, and antisocial, impede any progression for upward mobility in the corporate ladder. Furthermore, not all of the community members are citizens. For those undocumented, a Commission on Citizen Advocacy will not help those who are taking steps towards legal citizenship.

I urge you to reject the Governor's proposal to merge the commissions. The needs of each minority group are complex, distinct, multi-faceted and unique. To combine these commissions will jeopardize any voice that the APA community has in state government. Thank you.

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[1] http://ctapaac.com/apa-facts/

[2] http://ctapaac.com/apaac-arranges-cash-mob-december-15th-2012-patel-foods-asian-grocery-and-more-171-spencer-street-manchester-ct/

[3] http://www.policymic.com/articles/25000/asian-american-women-over-65-are-more-likely-to-commit-suicide-than-anyone-else-study-finds

[4] http://www.linguisticsociety.org/content/how-many-languages-are-there-world