

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

My name is Allison Polesel and I am a resident of Avon. Today I am urging you to reject the Governor's proposal to consolidate the commissions. All of these commissions are unique and represent communities that have complex and multi-faced issues. One of these commissions is the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission (APAAC).

With a staff of two and a 21-member voluntary commission, which currently has 17 members, APAAC has achieved great things for the state of Connecticut's Asian Pacific American (APA) population. APAAC held the state's first ever Asian Pacific American Leadership and Entrepreneurship Awards celebration, have responded to acts of hatred by promoting solidarity and unification of Asian communities, and solidified the Asian identity in Connecticut by supporting the development of "Little Asia" in Bridgeport. APAAC has proudly represented and promoted issues that affect APAs in Connecticut. However, much of what the Commission has accomplished and can continue to achieve is threatened by the Governor's proposed budget.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census Asian Pacific Americans have an estimated population of 157,000 in Connecticut and are the fastest growing minority population in the state. There are a total of 164 non-English home languages throughout Connecticut school systems and many of those are Asian languages. Additionally 24% of the state's population is immigrants or children of immigrants, who contribute to Connecticut's well-being. Non-citizen immigrants and Asian Pacific Americans alike would be without a voice in state government if this consolidation proposal is passed.

As a clinical social worker, it is especially important to have an agency that educates and brings awareness to the health disparities of the APA community in the area of mental health. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 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. The commission is the only entity in the state that has compiled these culturally competent services, in addition to serving as a resource for service providers.

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