



South Asian Bar Association of Connecticut
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By Electronic Mail

February 19, 2013

Appropriations Committee
Legislative Office Building
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: Public Hearing on the Consolidation of State Commissions

Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee:

The South Asian Bar Association of Connecticut submits this testimony in strong opposition to the proposed consolidation of the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission (APAAC) into an omnibus Commission on Citizen Advocacy. The creation of the APAAC and its initial growth over the past few years have allowed significant progress in increasing the voice and access of one of Connecticut's fastest growing minority populations. Doing away with the APAAC would take away a vital resource for addressing the many important issues facing Connecticut's Asian Pacific American community.

Asian Pacific Americans hail from over fifty countries, speak hundreds of languages and dialects, and practice almost all of the world's major religions. The APAAC therefore bears the responsibility of bridging the varying interests of a broad range of individuals and communities. Treating minorities as a monolithic block ignores the different challenges that each community faces and undermines the viability of the Commission to be useful in helping address those concerns. While there are many overlapping issues that all minorities face, there are issues that are unique to the Asian Pacific American community which require the particular attentions of the Commission: issues of domestic security and an increase in hate crimes towards APA individuals in the aftermath of September the Eleventh; immigration reform and the intersection between local law enforcement and federal immigration policy; increased incidence of bullying directed towards APA children and youths; the dangers of stereotypical designation of APA individuals as "model minorities" who do not experience race-based disadvantage; a cultural tendency among APA communities towards political distrust or disengagement, among other concerns. The resources devoted

to these APA-specific issues is already very limited, without spreading those resources even thinner.

SABAC and its sister organization the Connecticut Asian Pacific American Bar Association (CAPABA) are eager to continue their partnerships with the APAAC to further our respective missions to serve our communities and to increase diversity here in Connecticut. This proposed consolidation, just as the APAAC has begun to flourish, will represent a step backwards in the cause of increased diversity in government, and frustrates the initial purpose of establishing these commissions. While we can certainly respect and appreciate the current budgetary crisis, we urge you not to address those problems at the expense of Connecticut's minority communities.

We understand that this Committee is tasked with difficult decisions, and appreciate your consideration of these comments. Should you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact Andy Corea at acorea@ssjr.com. We sincerely hope you will preserve the APAAC as an individual Commission to serve its vital objectives in the years to come.

Respectfully Submitted,
The South Asian Bar Association of Connecticut
Board of Directors

By:



Andy I. Corea, Esq.
President