



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN AFFAIRS COMMISSION



Address:

18-20 Trinity Street
Room 202
Hartford, CT 06106
Tel: 860-240-0080
Fax: 860-240-0315
Email: apaac@cga.ct.gov
Website:
<http://ctapaac.com>

Chair

Dr. William A. Howe

Vice-Chair

Sheila Charmoy

Secretary

Uswah Khan

Treasurer

An-Ming Truxes

Commissioners

Arlene Avery
Dr. Vinh Cam
Theodore Feng
Jack K. Hasegawa
Theodore Hsu
Trung Le
George Mathanool
Thomas Nguyen-Phuoc
M. Angela Rola
Arvind Shaw
Henry C. Lee
(Honorary)

Executive Director

Mui Mui Hin-McCormick

Legislative Analyst

Alok Bhatt

Dear Chairwoman Gerratana, Chairwoman Johnson, distinguished members of the Public Health Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Alok Bhatt. I serve as Legislative Analyst for the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission (APAAC/the Commission). The Connecticut General Assembly established APAAC in 2008 to engage and advocate for our state's Asian Pacific American (APA) population. This population consists of peoples originating from over 62 countries, who speak more than 100 distinct languages and dialects.

In supporting APA communities, and all peoples facing barriers to health care, APAAC writes in strong support of HB-5385: An Act Concerning Language Interpreters in Hospitals.

2012 Census data estimates nearly 150,000 APAs residing in the state of Connecticut. A significant majority of APAs are foreign born. Although 76% have obtained some form of health coverage, approximately 13% remain uninsured. Furthermore, nearly one-third of Connecticut APAs speak English less than very well.

Language barriers perpetuate inequality in APA health access. The White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (WHA-API) determines that APAs in the United States face difficulty communicating with healthcare providers, ultimately deterring many from seeking services. This creates problems in data collection to assess and address the demographics of health disparity.

APAAC believes a policy facilitating communication between APAs and healthcare providers is absolutely integral to a sustainable, effective healthcare system. Considering high rates of cervical cancer, Hepatitis B, diabetes, Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD), and other severe illnesses afflicting APA communities, hospital interpreters would provide an invaluable service to APAs seeking treatment. Even the ability to communicate with doctors and staff for less serious conditions would improve health equity for APA communities.

In bolstering access to important services, APAAC will soon hold community workshops across the state to address APA health concerns. Presently, we distribute "I-SPEAK" cards to inform providers that receive federal funds of individuals' need for translation. APAAC staff also refers community members to the state's limited network of APA

*18-20 Trinity Street, Hartford, CT 06106
Tel. (860) 240-0080, Fax (860) 240-0315
E-Mail: apaac@cga.ct.gov
Web Site – <http://ctapaac.com/>*



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN AFFAIRS COMMISSION



service providers. The Commission continually considers additional initiatives to engage and assist APA communities in our state.

However, one Commission and a handful of community service providers cannot alone resolve health inequity within Connecticut's APA population. The legislature must move forward with this initiative to assist world language speakers maintain their health and well-being. HB-5385 signifies a single, crucial step towards a healthier Connecticut.

APAAC greatly appreciates the Public Health Committee recognizing the needs of APA and all communities of color.

Sincerely,

Alok Bhatt
Legislative Analyst, Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission

*18-20 Trinity Street, Hartford, CT 06106
Tel. (860) 240-0080, Fax (860) 240-0315
E-Mail: apaac@cga.ct.gov
Web Site – <http://ctapaac.com/>*