

Testimony/Personal Statement Template
The Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission Requires Additional Funding to Effectively Serve the Community

By Quyen Truong

My name is Quyen Truong. I live in West Hartford, Connecticut (CT) and work at the North Central Regional Mental Health Board in Newington.

When I was growing up in West Hartford, a newly arrived refugee from Vietnam, I felt isolated from my new community. My family struggled to fit in. We had no voice, no representation, and we struggled to find resources. I felt overwhelmed and alone. My family struggled and got by, but I never thought I wanted to live in CT again. When I left for college, I sought out Asian communities. I wanted to feel like I belonged. I learned about the Vietnam War and the history of Asian Americans, and I came to terms with the myriad of challenges that face Asian communities across the country.

Despite some qualms, I decided to explore living in Connecticut after grad school. Upon my return, I was pleasantly surprised to learn about Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission (APAAC) and to find that CT was starting to recognize the importance of addressing disparities from an Asian perspective. The APAAC is one of the main reasons why I feel like I can stay in CT. I feel like a part of something greater now. Thanks to APAAC, I am creating new connections across the diverse Asian communities and building a movement with other Asians. I feel represented and supported and valued.

The Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission needs to retain its funding for its operations because it plays an integral role in bringing together different communities towards common goals. This is what Connecticut is all about. The Commission works in prevention as well as in addressing immediate priorities, ranging from developing a cohort that addresses Problem Gambling in the Southeast Asian communities, to helping with the varied transitional needs of the refugee Karen folks. Moreover, the Commission takes part in various initiatives throughout the state, including working on promoting Health Equity, and playing an integral role in helping plan and develop Community Conversations about Mental Health. The Commission has been able to find the thread among the various social and economic needs of our different groups, and weave our efforts together into a cohesive tapestry of action.

In the realm of health advocacy, the Commission has played a pivotal role in promoting the Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) standards via the CT Multicultural Health Partnership. The Commission recognizes that Asian Pacific Americans (APAs) in Connecticut have a high diversity of lower-diffusion languages, creating issues with language access, cultural competency, and other disparities. Not all APAs are wealthy, well-educated and well off, and even those that fit into this mold still need representation within the state. APAs are the fastest growing minority in Connecticut. We need advocacy and engagement on the state, local and community levels, which the Commission provides. The Commission is the only group that links and coordinates efforts among the dozens of Asian ethnic minority groups across the state.

Without APAAC, our community would lose a centralized location to find information and resources concerning the community. Without a persistent voice in the state government, APAs will lose our voice and our ability to self-advocate. Please continue to fully fund the APAAC to acknowledge the importance of its role in promoting democracy, and in promoting the well-being of the various APA communities statewide.