



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN AFFAIRS COMMISSION



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February 19, 2015

Dear Chairman and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission (APAAC), I am writing to you today about supporting HB 5793, an Act Establishing Safe Haven Day.

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I am an MSW intern with the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission (APAAC) and have been participating in the Safe Haven Meeting Group since the beginning of this year. One of the cases that were discussed was on a 25 year old Cambodian young woman who is currently incarcerated at York Correctional for the abandonment of her newborn when she was 17, which led to the death of the newborn.

This case has touched me at a personal level as I am of Cambodian descent. I can understand that the young woman mentioned above was scared and that she had no place to turn to for help, as in the Cambodian culture it was unacceptable to lose purity before marriage. If that were the case, then the community would shun the family, and the person who has brought shame to the family is disowned. Before pursuing my master's degree I have worked a few years within my own community and have seen the cultural and linguistic barriers that have inhibited the community from seeking proper help or services to address various needs. At APAAC, we have seen these same barriers reflected throughout the Asian and Pacific American community. In the time of uncertainty and with the possibility of repercussions from the family or community, many others, like the young Cambodian woman, would otherwise do something unfortunate during a time of panic due to the cultural beliefs they are expected to adhere to.

APAAC supports the establishment of Safe Haven Day because while at the same time the day serves as a memorial for the little angels whom might have otherwise been forgotten, it can also educate communities about their rights and the help that is available to them, regardless of cultural background. The Safe Haven Act has been implemented for ten years, but our communities don't know that. Let's change that and pass HB 5793. More babies will be saved with a chance to live a fulfilling life, and more mothers and fathers can live on knowing they did the right thing, not wasting away in prison because of shame, fear and loneliness during their time of need.

Sincerely,

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