



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

M. Angela Rola

Vice-Chair

Trung Le

Secretary

Uswah Khan

Treasurer

Dr. Atique Mirza

Commissioners

Arlene Avery
Theodore Feng
Jack K. Hasegawa
Sylvia Ho
Theodore Hsu
George Mathanool
Arvind Shaw
An-Ming Truxes

Executive Director

Mui Mui Hin-McCormick

Legislative Analyst

Alok Bhatt

Wednesday, February 25, 2015

Dear Chairwoman Slossberg, Chairman Fleischmann, and distinguished members of the Education 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. Nearly one-third of all APAs in Connecticut speak English less than very well, restricting our communities' access to employment, services, and education.

In recognizing the rights of APA youth, and all world languages speakers, to self-determination and equal opportunity, APAAC writes in strong support of HB-6835: An Act Concerning English Language Learners. The Commission particularly appreciates the language extending the "time an eligible student spends in a program of bilingual education" to sixty months. We also laud the Education Committee decreasing districts' student language threshold from twenty to six students.

APAAC considers cultural competency a significant step towards diminishing achievement gaps in education, and fostering multicultural perspectives in APA and all Connecticut youth. While the Commission understands the importance of English language proficiency, we cannot understate the importance of bilingual education to achieve this goal.

Extensive debate encircles the issue of how to best educate English Language Learners (ELL). The aims of these instruction methods also seem to differ, with some mainstreaming students into grade promotion standards, and others focusing on the mastery of multiple languages while engaging the academic curriculum. While studies to determine the most effective teaching technique produce mixed results, the Commission supports an education system which enables students to become fully bilingual while achieving academic excellence.

In realizing this vision, APAAC believes a 60-month bilingual education period, with additional support programs for students requiring it,

*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



affords a proper and adjustable balance of native and English language instruction. While 30 months of language instruction may teach moderate degrees of comprehension and conversational speech, the levels of understanding necessary for critical thinking and complex cognition requires a greater transition into the target language.

Furthermore, reducing the count of students necessary for a district to initiate ELL programs for their dominant tongue will afford many APA students language access to public education. The APA population's low density and high diversity present access challenges in medical, legal, and other systems. These challenges can no longer remain unmet, particularly in our school systems. We must grant language access for APA students and all world language speakers, so that these diverse youth can become the globally thinking, locally leading harbingers of our future. As our state and nation's demographics shift, our models of education must adapt to these rapid changes and provide the best programs and services for our students.

The Commission acknowledges the varying capabilities in individual students to learn in English while learning the language itself, and believes HB-6385 reasonably accommodates the diverse needs of world language speakers while promoting academic achievement.

APAAC appreciates your time and consideration of this highly important matter.

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/>*