



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN AFFAIRS COMMISSION



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Alok Bhatt

Dear Senator Crisco, Representative Megna, and esteemed members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Alok Bhatt. I serve as Legislative Analyst for the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission.

In promoting health and healthcare equity in Connecticut, and considering health and mental health issues prevalent in many Asian Pacific American (APA) communities, APAAC writes strong support of Raised Bill 32: An Act Concerning the Commission on Health Equity (CHE).

To serve its increasingly diverse population, the State of Connecticut needs an agency with particular focus on health disparities as they relate to gender, ethnicity, culture, and language. It is well-known that health and mental health gaps exist in our state<sup>1</sup>. In addition to our Department of Public Health (DPH), which also operates the Connecticut Multicultural Health Partnership (CMHP), we need an entity that represents the health needs of diverse communities before the legislature<sup>2</sup>.

Although we have limited data on APA health and mental health in Connecticut, APAAC's own 2014 Needs Assessment survey of Southeast Asian communities expressed several points of concern that justify the need for a functional CHE. 29% of survey respondents cited "Often or Always" experiencing language barriers with their medical provider. 59% of survey respondents expressed that language access services were rarely or never available during healthcare visits. Furthermore, our data suggest that 37% of survey respondents experienced some sort of discrimination from a healthcare provider within the year prior to completing the survey<sup>3</sup>. The bodies collectively comprising the CHE serve as an engine for policy that may address these significant challenges in health access and care.

Poor health in one community, regardless of how small, impacts the total health equity in the State of Connecticut. We need an entity that can work in conjunctions with DPH's various initiatives to address

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/hisr/pdf/Facts\\_Minority\\_Health\\_CT\\_2013.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/hisr/pdf/Facts_Minority_Health_CT_2013.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.ct.gov/cche/lib/cche/CHE\\_By-Laws\\_Final\\_-11-25-08.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/cche/lib/cche/CHE_By-Laws_Final_-11-25-08.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://ctapaac.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/APAAC-NEEDS-ASSESSMENT30JUNE2014-REPORT.pdf>



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critical health concerns in diverse populations. CHE represents one such entity.

We hope to see a well-funded and functioning CHE emerge after this session, and thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Alok Bhatt  
*Legislative Analyst, APAAC*

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