



Testimony in support of Senate Bill 98
Ohio Asian American Health Coalition
Finance Committee
Tuesday, January 21, 2020

Good afternoon Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Burke, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 98, legislation to create the Ohio Asian-American and Pacific Islander Affairs Commission and the Office of Asian American and Pacific Islander Affairs.

My name is Manju Sankarappa, Executive Director of Ohio Asian American Health Coalition (OAAHC) founded in 2005, Ohio Asian American Health Coalition is an alliance of communities and individuals focused on the health and well-being of Ohio's Asian American & Pacific Islander populations. The Ohio Asian American Health Coalition became incorporated as a nonprofit organization in Ohio and received its 501©3 in 2008. We are submitting Testimony in support of SB98 on January 21, 2020.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE OAAHC:

- Support the health initiatives of all member organizations;
- Promote research and education to address health disparities;
- Advocate for improved access to personalized, culturally and linguistically competent health care.

The OAAHC serves Asian Americans living in Ohio through its grass roots member Organizations including constituents of nine member organizations as well as many of individual members and supporting Organizations. Its activities are guided by common values, including the belief that all of Ohio's citizens must have access to quality health care. Through our mission-based projects, we strive for excellence through collective action that can improve health programs and services for all.

The coalition is led by an Executive Committee, comprised of representatives from each of the member organization and individual representation. The member organizations are: Asian community Alliance (Cincinnati), Asian American Community of Dayton(Dayton), ASIA INC(Cleveland/Akron), Asian Festival Corporation(AFC), Asian-American Community Service Council(ACSC), Asian American Community Services(AACS), Bhutanese Nepalese Association of Central Ohio(BCCO), Laotian Volunteer Donation Association(LVDA). The Coalition supports the creation of Ohio Asian-American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) commission in State of Ohio.

- The OAAHC provides **support to member organizations** in their efforts to improve Asian American's well-being and quality of life through research, education, and advocacy for improved access to quality services.
- The membership also includes individuals from government, research and academic institutions, health and human service areas, professional, student organizations, faith and community-based organizations.

Being long term American citizens and Immigrants we understand the struggles and complexities of what being a new American family looks like. We are advocating in support of the creation of the Ohio Asian-American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Affairs Commission to understand the unique difficulties of addressing the needs of the Asian American and Pacific Islander population in Ohio. The formation of this commission will be an important step in ensuring that state government is accessible and equitable to all Ohioans.



Increasing Health Equity and Access to Health Services

- Center for Disease Control identified Central Ohio as the high risk foreign-born population living in Central Ohio. Need for additional hepatitis B screenings and treatment remain vital, life-saving, cost-effective measures.
- Mental Health Services - Stigma related to mental illness in the Asian community has resulted in underuse and/or delayed mental health services is still a major issue. This also results in Since Asians wait to receive the treatment the treatment becomes more costly and in some instances not treatable.
- In addition, Opioid Crisis (drug abuse) among Asians community has increased in Asian community.
- Asian student victimization by bullying has been identified as a serious issue. Asian youth can develop feelings of isolation and depression. The rate of depression associated with minimal social support is relatively high among Asian seniors, especially women.
- Racism-related stress among Asian teens, college students, and adults have all been identified as unique problems among U.S. Asians.
- Barriers to voting have a disproportionate impact on citizens who are immigrants and refugees, particularly those with limited proficiency in English.
- The new 2020 Census requires additional assistance to those communities with language barrier, since it will be all electronic response.

As citizens of Ohio and immigrant AAPI populations differ in culture, languages, religions, and socio-economic status, policy makers should be aware of the many differences present in this group. Stimulate public awareness and advocacy of the Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders through education; coordinate and assist other public and private organizations that serve Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders; advise the governor, general assembly, and state departments and agencies on the priorities of Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders populations; promote the delivery of state services across diverse Asian communities through Ohio Asian American Health Coalition; and provide resources for culturally appropriate organizations and language services.

The Coalition urges and need for Commission that is diverse and representation of all the communities based on population demographics. Thank you for giving opportunity to testify on behalf of Ohio Asian Coalition and its member organization.