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Sponsor Testimony for House Bill 224  
House State and Local Government Committee  
Tuesday, June 15, 2021

Good Afternoon Chairman Wiggam, Vice-Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee. I want to thank you for allowing my joint sponsor and I to offer sponsor testimony on House Bill 224 (HB 224), legislation to create the Ohio Asian American and Pacific Islander Affairs Commission, and the Office of Asian American and Pacific Islander Affairs.

According to the 2018 American Community Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau, Ohio's Asian population has more than doubled since 2000 and is six times the 1980 count and is continuing to grow. Ohio's Asian American community in Ohio is currently comprised of:

- More than 345,000 people, accounting for 3.0 percent of the state's total population.
- More than 21,000 Asian American-owned businesses in Ohio.
- There are more than 39,000 Asian American students enrolled in Ohio's elementary and secondary schools, making up 2.1 percent of Ohio's total student body.
- Nearly 38,000 Asian American Ohioans are enrolled in college or graduate school.

House Bill 224 is an essential step in ensuring that state government is accessible and equitable to all Ohioans so they can live, work and retire with safety and security. Hate crimes against Asian Americans increased significantly over the past year, with some major cities seeing [spikes as high as 150%](#) and Cleveland, OH with an alarming 200% increase. [More than 3,800 racist incidents targeting Asians were reported from March 19, 2020 through February 28, 2021, with more than 500](#) of them happening in the New Year alone. This legislation would be a step towards addressing the unique concerns of the Asian-American and Pacific Islander community, otherwise known as the AAPI community.

The formation of this commission will be an important step in ensuring that state government is accessible and equitable to the fastest-growing racial/ethnic group in the U.S. and Ohio. The new commission will do the following:

- Gather and disseminate information and conduct hearings, conferences, investigations, and special studies on problems and programs concerning Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders;
- Secure appropriate recognition of the accomplishments and contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders to Ohio;
- Stimulate public awareness of the problems of Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders by conducting a program of public education;



- Develop, coordinate, and assist other public and private organizations that serve Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, including the conduction of training programs for community leadership and service project staff;
- Advise the governor, general assembly, and state departments and agencies on the priorities of Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders populations;

It is our duty as elected officials to do our part to support our AAPI communities by creating this commission and building unity so every Ohioan has the opportunity to live the American Dream, right here at home. Thank you, Chairman Wiggam, and members of the State and Local Government Committee for your attention to this matter. At this time, we would be happy to answer any questions you may have.