

Dayton Chapter

JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

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Written Testimony for SC 2198

Submitted by: Donald Hayashi

Dayton Chapter Japanese American Citizens League

Testifying as Proponent

Chair Matt Dolan, Vice Chair Theresa Gavarone, Ranking Member Vernon Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Donald Hayashi and I live in Vandalia, Ohio, and I am representing the Dayton Chapter Japanese American Citizens League (Dayton JACL). Ohio's Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) population is one of the state's fastest-growing racial/ethnic demographic groups, having increased by 40% between 2000 and 2009. It is notable that currently, Asian and AAPI Ohioans are the only ethnic group without a state level entity that would allow for coordination of resources and provide a centralized point of contact.

For this reason, I am writing in support of the budget amendment that creates and funds the Ohio AAPI Commission and the Office of AAPI Affairs. With the escalation of anti-Asian violence that has accompanied the COVID-19 pandemic, the deaths of six Asian women on March 16th in Atlanta, the loss of four Sikh lives in the Indianapolis shooting on April 15th, and vandalism and attempted arson against Asian businesses in Riverside, Ohio, we in the Ohio Asian and AAPI community are living in a constant state of fear and anxiety. Something needs to change. While resolutions and statements of solidarity help bring awareness to anti-Asian hate, we must take actionable steps to protect AAPI communities from further harm and violence and to invest in our wellbeing and livelihood.

Your support for the Ohio AAPI Commission and Office of AAPI affairs along with your support for the additional two amendments listed below will help demonstrate that Ohio is invested in our community's safety and well-being:

1. Create and Fund the Ohio AAPI Affairs Commission and the Office of AAPI Affairs
2. \$2M earmarks for grants for community organizations that serve Asians and AAPIs
3. Increases earmarks for Refugee Program Services by \$100,000 per year

The Dayton JACL was founded 70 years ago when Japanese American relocated to the Midwest. At the start of World War II, the United States government forced removal of 125,000 Japanese Americans from the West Coast and incarcerated them in government detention center. Subsequently they were encouraged to relocate in other parts of the U.S. Many found Ohio to be a welcoming state where they could attend college and find gainful employment. However, there were instances of discrimination, racial prejudice, and rejection. They were viewed as "other".

The JACL brought together Japanese Americans to provide for mutual support and fellowship, for improvement of our community, and to promote good citizenship. We celebrate our rich heritage, and participate in activities which promote the building understanding, acceptance, and community.

Today's growing AAPI population is diverse, and we seek to bring all AAPI citizens together to foster greater understanding, care, and respect for one another. Annually we participate in the Asian American Legislative Day at the Ohio Statehouse, where we can learn about current events and to meet with our legislators. We believe that the Ohio AAPI Commission and Office of AAPI Affairs will greatly benefit the AAPI community and the entire State of Ohio to improve relationships and building a strong state in service to all.

The Commission will help to provide language assistance to connect the AAPI community members, particularly newly arrive residents, with services and government programs. It can aid in economic growth and development for the entire state. It will connect AAPI Ohioans with health services, particularly mental health and promote health equity. The Commission can be instrumental in the inclusion of Asian and Asian American history in public school curriculum, so that all Children will feel they belong and bring contributions for the betterment of all.

I respectfully and strongly encourage the Senate Finance Committee to pass these amendments. Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to testify in support of the above amendments.

Sincerely,

Donald Hayashi, President
Dayton Chapter Japanese American Citizens League