

Written Testimony for SC 2198
Submitted by: Vivian Yu
OPAWL
Testifying as Proponent

Chair Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Senate Finance committee,

My name is Vivian Yu and I live in the Ohio City neighborhood of Cleveland, Ohio. I am a second generation Chinese American and am also representing OPAWL. 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, and the loss of four Sikh lives in the Indianapolis shooting on April 15th, 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

As someone who works in healthcare, a statewide AAPI Commission and Office of AAPI Affairs can help ensure Asian Ohioans are able to access the care they need. There is such great diversity within the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) group, which is reflected in the wide range of health disparities that exist. Asian and AAPI people have historically experienced many challenges in trying to access healthcare and obtain health insurance like language barriers, lack of awareness of resources and services available to them, and social stigma associated with mental health in particular. These factors can often result in Asians and AAPIs underutilizing needed health services like preventive care screenings and chronic disease management. Asians and AAPIs are the only ethnic/racial demographic group that experiences cancer as the leading cause of death. Asian and AAPI people have lower cancer screening rates and are commonly diagnosed at a later stage than other ethnic/racial demographic groups. An AAPI Commission and Office of AAPI Affairs can help us identify and address these health disparities.

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.