



State Senator
TINA MAHARATH

3rd District

Sponsor Testimony
Senator Tina Maharath
Senate Bill 87
Government Oversight and Reform Committee
June 2, 2021

Good afternoon Chairman Roegner, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Craig and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present Senate Bill 87, legislation to create the Ohio Asian-American and Pacific Islander Affairs Commission and the Office of Asian-American and Pacific Islander Affairs.

As the daughter of Laotian refugees, I understand the struggles and complexities of what being a new American family looks like. I am advocating for the creation of the AAPI Commission and the Office of Asian-American and Pacific Islander Affairs because I understand the unique difficulties of addressing the needs of the AAPI 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.

According to the 2018 American Community Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau, there are over 345,000 Asian-Americans living in Ohio, comprising 3 percent of our population. While this may seem like a small percentage, it is growing rapidly. Since the start of the millennium, Ohio's AAPI population has grown by 97 percent.¹

Ohio's Asian American community faces unique challenges. Roughly three-quarters of the population speaks a language other than English at home, with over 196,000 being born in a different country. As immigrant AAPI populations differ in culture, languages, religions, and socio-economic status, policy makers should be aware of the many differences present within our community.

The primary responsibilities of this new commission would be to: gather and disseminate information concerning Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders; 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 communities; and provide resources for culturally appropriate organizations and language services.

I look forward to a thoughtful legislative process and appreciate your attention to this important issue. I respectfully request your favorable consideration of Senate Bill 87. Thank you and I am happy to respond to questions from the committee.

¹ <https://www.apiavote.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Ohio-2020.pdf>