**Testimony in Support of an Ohio AAPI Affairs Commission**

Submitted by the following members of the 2018 Ohio Asian American Pacific Islander Advisory Council: Adhikari, Kashi; Katsuyama, Ron; Lu, Yung-Chen; Munoz, Cora; Nelson, Rebecca; Phommasathit, Bounthanh

While Asians and Pacific Islanders comprise only **2.3% of Ohio’s population**, they are the **fastest-growing racial/ethnic group in the U.S. and in Ohio**. Since 2000 the number of Asian Ohioans has increased by 144 percent, and in 2017 the Census Bureau estimated that Asian comprise the fastest growing group in Ohio. With 11.74 million residents, **over one-half million Ohio residents (4.5%) are foreign-born**, and **43% of this population were born in Asia**.[[1]](#footnote-1) **Support of these new immigrants and others** in their quest for full participation in Ohio’s economic, social/cultural, and civic activities **is a good investment for Ohio**.

Although many Asian Americans have wealth comparable to that of Whites, the relatively high median family income of Asians masks the large wealth inequalities across generations and ethnic groups. For example, many Asian American seniors live in poverty, and immigrant family households tend to include a larger number of working children and relatives outside of a single nuclear family. Consequently, **the 11.4% poverty rate of Asian Americans represents the great variability of family circumstances**. **An Ohio Office of AAPI Affairs can help identify these individuals and help promote their access to state services.**

About three-quarters of Ohio Asians speak a language other than English at home. However, differences exist among various ethnicities in their linguistic isolation. For example, almost one-half (46%) of Chinese Americans have “Limited English Proficiency,” that is, do not speak English “very well.” (The rates are lower, 30-31%, among Filipino Americans, and Asian Indians, respectively) Further, **about 35 percent of immigrants from Asia have high rates of limited English proficiency**, and **about one in five Asian households is linguistically isolated**—that is, no one in the household older than 13 can speak English exclusively or “very well.” This presents several serious challenges for members of these families, including access to state services and inclusion in Census 2020. **An Ohio Office of AAPI Affairs can coordinate outreach to substantially decrease the probability of a Census undercount**, as well as to **promote the delivery of state services to historically underserved Asian populations.**

**Workforce and Economic Development**

* Several Asian organizations have successfully supported economic development activities in their respective areas, e.g., Asian Indian Business Group (AIABG), Indian American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Cincinnati, Japan-America Society of Central Ohio, Japan-America Society of Greater Cincinnati, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce (Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati).
* Some groups, alone or in partnership with other organizations, have sponsored statewide initiatives. For example, the Asian Small Business Summit in Southwest Ohio (2017), Ohio Asian American Economic Summit (2017, 2019), the Asian American Commerce Group Economic Summit (2014, 2015, 2017, 2018, and 2019) brought many Asian business leaders together.
* A**n Ohio AAPI Affairs Commission can provide additional resources and critical partnerships that will facilitate even greater outreach into underserved Asian communities**. For example, the **Office of AAPI Affairs can partner with the Ohio Job and Family Services**, Office of Workforce Development, **to help attract highly motivated and qualified individuals** for jobs through its Workforce Investment Boards. Further, by helping provide computer training, resume workshops, ESOL classes, and job search assistance to new immigrants, they can **help ensure a steady, highly-qualified applicant pool for careers in areas of high priority.**
* Members of an Ohio AAPI Affairs Commission and the **Office of AAPI Affairs can** **be an important** **contact for those seeking business opportunities abroad** and for **foreign businesses seeking to establish trade or manufacturing plants in Ohio**.

**Promotion of Education**

* As children of immigrant parents tend to be highly motivated students, an **Office of AAPI Affairs can help identify talented high school students** for potential enrollment in an Ohio technical school, college, university, or professional school, thereby contributing toward Ohio’s future economic vitality.
* An **Office of AAPI Affairs can help high school students become aware of scholarship opportunities** and, in future years, help administer college scholarships programs established by private donors. **The Office can also sponsor career awareness programs** as well as **increase awareness of outstanding post-graduate programs in Ohio**.

**Increasing Health Equity and Access to Health Services**

* Ohio’s Medicaid expansion resulted in a large increase in the coverage of Ohio’s Asians, from 13,300 in 2013 to 34,200 in 2017. Yet, the Kaiser Family Foundation estimates that **7% of Asians are still uninsured**.[[2]](#footnote-2)
* Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) make up less than 5% of the total population in the United States, but account for more than 50% of nearly one million Americans living with chronic hepatitis B. Results of a $600,000 Kellogg Foundation grant awarded to the Ohio Asian American Health Coalition reveal that **the need for additional hepatitis B screenings and treatment in Ohio remain vital, life-saving, cost-effective measures that can be facilitated by partnerships facilitated by an Office of AAPI Affairs.**
* Underuse of health services, especially mental health services: According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHSA) **only 4.9 percent of Asians utilized mental health services from 2008-2012**, compared to 16.6 percent of Caucasians and 8.6 of African Americans. In addition, prescription drug use among Asians was only 3.1% (compared to 14.4% and 6.5% among Whites and African Americans, respectively. Similarly Asians used outpatient services less frequently (2.5%) than their White and African American counterparts (7.8% and 4.7%).[[3]](#footnote-3) **An Office of AAPI Affairs can help identify reasons for these instances of health service under-utilization and promote measures that increase health equity.**
* Asian student victimization by bullying has been identified as a serious issue. Asian youth can develop feelings of isolation and depression. **An Office of AAPI Affairs can help promote positive Asian youth identity development and effective social coping skills**
* The rate of depression associated with minimal social support is relatively high among Asian seniors, especially women. **An Office of AAPI Affairs can help support senior programs that include educational, nutritional and social activities.** (An apparently successful program is *The Lucky Seniors*, a senior congregate meal and wellness program sponsored by *Asian Services in Action, Inc*., in the Summit and Cuyahoga Counties.)
* Bias-related stress among Asian teens, college students, and adults have all been identified as unique problems among U.S. Asians.[[4]](#footnote-4) **An Office of AAPI Affairs can draw attention to this health problem and help generate resources to promote positive social environments.**
* **Cancer is the leading cause of death among Asians**, and leukemia, lymphoma, and myeloma account for almost 10% of both new cases and of deaths. While bone marrow treatment is an important tool for preventing death from these cancers Asians are less likely to find a donor match than members of other racial/ethnic groups. **While the general probability of finding a bone marrow donor match is over 90%, the current matching probability among Asian Americans is about 40%.** (In some of our Asian American communities, the chance of a match is 3-4%.) **An Office of AAPI Affairs can educate members of Asian communities about the need to add many more individuals to the bone marrow donor registry, thereby saving lives for decades to come.**

1. See the Migration Policy Institute (2017 Report) at: https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/demographics/OH [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See the Kaiser Family Foundation 2020 report on the status of Medicaid expansion at:

   https://www.kff.org/uninsured/state-indicator/rate-by-raceethnicity/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) 2015 Report at: https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/MHServicesUseAmongAdults/MHServicesUseAmongAdults.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See the report by the American Psychological Association (2016) report at:

   https://www.apa.org/pi/oema/resources/ethnicity-health/asian-american/stress-racism [↑](#footnote-ref-4)