

Testimony of Gregory Lam, MD
In support of SB98
Ohio Senate Finance Committee
May 17, 2021

Dear Senator Dolan and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

Ohio's Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) population represents the fastest-growing ethnic group in Ohio, with a population growth rate of 97% since 2000 and a total population of over 325,000. AAPIs are robust contributors to Ohio's medical systems and labor forces. Indeed, AAPI-owned businesses employ over 51,000 workers in Ohio and account for revenue surpassing \$6.8 billion annually. Although Ohio's AAPIs are such an integral part of Ohio's communities, we are the only large ethnic group without state level representation to discuss and advocate for AAPI-specific issues that dramatically affect the well-being of the state.

I am therefore here today to testify in support of the budget amendment that creates and funds the Ohio AAPI Commission and the Office of AAPI Affairs. As a health care professional, I have witnessed first-hand the health disparities experienced by our AAPI populations. 7% of AAPI in Ohio (over 17,000) lack health insurance. 14% live in poverty. With the rise in anti-Asian hate-crimes we have witnessed in the past year we have seen a need for mental health and social support services.

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 the health of the AAPI community, which in turn, contributes to the overall well-being of the state.

I humbly ask that the Committee create and fund the Ohio AAPI Affairs Commission and the Office of AAPI Affairs. These entities can best address the long-standing disparities in access to food, housing, education, safety, transportation and wealth. These adverse social-determinants-of-health can lead to chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and asthma. An Ohio AAPI Affairs Commission and Office of AAPI Affairs can directly address these challenges to help Ohioans.

Sincerely,

Gregory Lam, MD