Residents gather as the forum begins.

AAPI Action Forum | *Washington, DC September 12, 2015*

On September 12, about 200 District residents primarily from the Asian and Pacific Islander community met at Walter E. Washington Convention Center to determine how the District can work more collaboratively with residents across different cultures and ethnic backgrounds. Throughout the morning and afternoon, participants considered pressing issues and priorities in health, community safety, youth education, adult education and job training, small business engagement and affordable housing. Seventy-three percent of participants were from the AAPI Community.

Throughout the meeting, participants used keypad polling to register their views and engaged in facilitated group discussions about how the city can better meet their needs. The forum utilized methodology from Public Engagement Associates, a non-partisan, local organization that engages citizens in the public decision-making that affects their lives.

Gender	
Female	56%
Male	44%

Age	
24 and under	10%
25-34	21%
35-54	22%
45-54	22%
65 and better	25%

If you are Asian and Pacific Islander, what is your ethnic background	
Chinese American	59%
Asian Indian	2%
Vietnamese American	10%
Korean American	9%
Filipino American	5%
Pacific Islander	1%
Asian American of other origin	14%

Annual Household Income	
Under $25,000	23%
$25,000-49,999	12%
$50,000-74,999	13%
Over $75,000	40%
Not Sure	12%

Ward lived in	
Ward 1	12%
Ward 2	21%
Ward 3	2%
Ward 4	10%
Ward 5	7%
Ward 6	11%
Ward 7	1%
Ward 8	5%
Nor sure which Ward I live in	7%
Not a resident/own business	23%

How long lived in DC	
Less than 1 year	7%
1-5 years	23%
6-10 years	20%
11-20 years	20%
21-50 years	15%
More than 50 years	3%
Not a DC resident/own business	11%
Other	2%

Reasons for attending the forum

Participants identified their primary motivation for attending the forum:

- Learn and be part of the community
- Want to know more about government services, social services, health services and safety issues
- Want to be involved with the AAPI community and find out what the government is doing for the AAPI community
- To provide the youth input and our point of view. "I am here because I don't feel there is enough youth input in these types of events. I want my voice to be heard."
- Raising the concern over Museum Square
- It's "rare to participate in something like this in the US"
- Curious about the Mayor's comprehensive plan
- Concerns about senior health and housing

Children play as the adults listen to the speakers.

Health for Our Most Vulnerable Populations: Themes

Participants discussed: "What are the important actions for government to take to serve vulnerable populations better?" The common themes were:

37% More access to health services for seniors as well as better options for affordable health insurance

35% Increased access to language services

33% Connecting DC agencies to communities, increasing outreach. For instance, have bilingual forms available through public schools

29% Create mobile clinics or better access to transportation to hospitals

19% Increase options for mental health therapies

15% Better options for coverage and knowledge of alternative medicine in tandem with conventional medical care.

14% Provide healthy food in grocery stores and school lunches to ensure good nutrition

Participants also discussed: "What can our communities do to better to serve the vulnerable (*examples* provided by participants):

- Volunteer to help "bridge the communication gap" and provide interpretation services.
- Share and raise awareness about resources (i.e., through community organization, churches and at festivals)
- Incorporate more cultural sensitivity in community meetings to make everyone more relaxed and engaged
- Health providers (e.g. CVS) should provide language resources, doctors and staff that can speak their language
- "Be active and vocal" to communicate our needs to government
- Ensure senior centers provide information services available in different languages

Improving Community Safety

Participants identified the most important ways for communities and government to work together more effectively. Common themes were:

42% Address issues underlying violent crime (i.e., poverty, education, homelessness and jobs)
41% Increase community policing; more communication from MPD to the community. Officers knowing residents, business owners and our languages
30% Better nighttime security presence—increase visibility of police, adding more and better lighting
30% "Realize that people relying on the police may not trust them and build the relationships from the ground up"
23% More gun regulations
21% Cultural sensitivity training for all MPD offices

K-12 Education: Language Services and Challenges in DCPS and Charter Schools

There was some confusion among participants, as there is in the larger DC community, about the difference between DC Public Schools and Charter Schools. Only fifty-one percent of participants knew that charters schools are a type of public school and 52% thought that charter schools were a part of DC Public Schools (DCPS). Participants also considered two questions:

1. What can the DC government do to ensure our children receive an education that effectively addresses the language access and cultural sensitivity challenges they face? Here are themes they identified:

   49% More cultural competency training for both parents and teachers
   48% Increase language resources for families (not just for students). Getting official interpreters to communicate between teachers and ELL parents instead of unofficial translators.
   38% Evaluate the effectiveness of current DCPS programs and have consistency across programs
   37% Match up students from different backgrounds (peer mentoring) to learn from each other and to ease the transition into DCPS
   16% Reduce class size to give students more individual attention.

2. What can the community do to ensure our children receive an education that effectively addresses the language access and cultural sensitivity challenges they face? Here are the themes they identified:

   46% Support out-of-school opportunities for youth (i.e., tutoring programs)
   41% Offer more mentoring programs like Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts, Asian American LEAD)
   34% Communities need to emphasize the importance of education
   22% "Foster intergenerational communication"
   21% Encourage parental involvement
   21% Prevent bullying

Tackling Our Unique Adult Education and Job Training Challenges

What are the important things the government—and our communities—can do to ensure that our residents get the training they need to move to better, higher paying jobs and careers?

46% Encourage public/private partnership as a partway to providing jobs
46% Develop more training programs focused on skills required for better paying jobs
30% Provide stipends for child care and transportation for people going through trainings
19% Government needs to get the word out on their programs
16% Implement language training to address barriers
14% Provide night classes for those working during the day
11% Create formal soft skills training to address cultural differences

Supporting Small Businesses

Participants discussed: "How can our neighborhood retailers (e.g., restaurant, dry cleaners, nail salons, convenience stores, etc.) become more effectively engaged with the communities around them?" The common themes were:

- Sponsor events (i.e., festivals, little league teams)
- Participate in communities events
- Provide high-quality customer service
- Hire from the local community
- Utilize community boards, local newspapers, community events, etc. to market services

Addressing the Affordability of Housing in D.C.

After a presentation by Polly Donaldson, Director of the D.C. Department of Housing and Community Development, participants were asked three polling questions:

1. *What is your level of support for the Mayor to invest $100 million to increase affordable housing and produce 10,000 units each year?*

   3% I don't support her investing public dollars in this way
   10% I support her investing public dollars but it should be less than $100 million annually
   46% I support her investing $100 million public dollars annually
   41% I support her investing public dollars but more than $100 million annually

2. *How open are you to losing some existing affordable units, if we are able to increase the number of affordable units in the city?*

   21% Not open at all
   29% Somewhat open
   18% Quite open
   32% Very open

3. *How important is it to keep ample units of affordable housing in neighborhoods that are growing rapidly in population or will grow rapidly in population in the near future?*

   3% Not important at all
   10% Somewhat important
   46% Important
   41% Very important

End of Day Evaluation

What is your level of satisfaction with today's forum?

2% Very low
5% Low
18% Medium
53% High
22% Very High

How important is it for residents to be able to weigh in on matters affecting the city like we did here today?

1% Not important at all
1% Somewhat important
18% Important
79% Very Important

How committed would you likely be if there were opportunities for sustained engagement on these issues today?

2% Not committed at all
7% Somewhat committed
46% Committed
44% Very committed

Ideas for How to Move Forward

At the end of the forum, participants were asked to propose how the community might work with MOAPIA (and other District offices and agencies) to advance the recommendations that were proposed. Responses included:

- "Create a platform through which people can communicate more openly"
- "Listen and follow through and reach out to the different communities"
- "The agencies should come up with the goals and timeframes"
- "Reach out to stakeholder communities directly, such as Wah Luck House or Museum Square residents"
- "Be receptive to ideas from the community because they are experts in their neighborhood & issues"
- "Ask to receive feedback from community as a measurement to see if action is taking place"
- "Follow up with smaller community sessions"[i]

This document, and the full report, will be translated into Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese and Korean will be available on MOAPIA's website at http://apia.dc.gov/ by Sept. 23rd.