

Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs for the District of Columbia
Committee on Housing & Community Development
Written Remarks
February 18, 2015

The Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs respectfully submits the following written remarks to the Committee on Housing & Community Development.

About the Commission

The establishment of the District of Columbia's Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs ("Commission") is to advise the Mayor, the Council, the Director of the Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs, and the public on the views and needs of the Asian American and Pacific Islander ("AAPI") communities in the District of Columbia. The Commission works closely with the Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs ("OAPIA") to support its efforts to achieve success for the AAPI community through advocacy, community engagement, intergovernmental affairs, and policy and research.

The Commission shall consist of at least 15 members appointed by the Mayor, who are all residents of the District. Currently, the Commission consist of 10 commissioners who reflect the demographic, geographic, and ethnic diversity of the AAPI community in the District of Columbia. Each Commissioner serves a 3-year term and meetings are held and open to the public every other month.

What We Do

According to 2012 Census numbers, the AAPI population grew to 29,132 or 4.6% of the entire District population. This was a 77% increase from 2000. The largest ethnic groups reported in 2012 were Indians, followed by Chinese, Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Japanese. The per capita income for AAPIs is \$48,156, compared to \$44,670 for the entire District. However, 13% of the District's AAPI population lives in poverty. Within the AAPI population, 16% are limited English proficient, compared to 4.6% of the entire district population.

It is evident based on the statistical data provided, OAPIA remains to be a vital asset to the District's AAPI community. Therefore, it is the role of the Commission to ensure that OAPIA continues to receive the support it needs for the services and assistance it provides to the District's AAPI communities.

Each Year, the Commission is responsible for:

- Advising and assisting with the development of mechanisms and structures in the government to respond to the needs of the AAPI communities
- Advising on government policies and programs
- Serving as a liaison to private organizations in the community
- Promoting public awareness of government programs
- Issuing an annual report on AAPIs to the Mayor

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Commission's Plans

With a newly appointed Chair, Vice-Chair and Commissioners, the Commission began working on a strategic plan to enhance its support of OAPIA and the District's AAPI community. At the end of 2014, the newly appointed Commission completed revisions to its bylaws which had yet to be revised since 1993. The Commission also hosted a *Meet and Greet* with the newly appointed Director of OAPIA, David Do, where Director Do discussed his vision for OAPIA. The Commission is very eager to support his vision as well as the successes that OAPIA has accomplished over the years.

This past year, the Commission lost fellow Commissioner Ajay K. Ojha, who unexpectedly passed away while volunteering overseas on a community service project. In honor of Commissioner Ojha, the Commission established an award to be presented to an individual who displays the spirit of Commissioner Ojha through exceptional volunteerism in the DC community. The award is being planned to be presented at an Asian American Heritage Month event.

Lastly, set forth below are the Commission's recommendations to the Mayor.

- Maintain OAPIA because it is a critical voice for meeting the needs of AAPIs in the District. As a minority population with comparatively smaller numbers, AAPIs need OAPIA to make our needs visible and assist District agencies to build their capacity to provide culturally and linguistically competent services
- Maintain OAPIA's budget and grant-making capacity. AAPI-serving organizations rely on OAPIA grant support and capacity-building assistance. Without OAPIA grant-making support, our population's needs may not be adequately addressed.
- Increase the number of AAPI cabinet appointments. Diversity and representation are critical for effectively serving residents of the District of Columbia.
- Increase the hiring of Asian language bilingual staff for the positions with major public contracts (e.g., health and human services, public schools, housing, and police).

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Thank you for providing us this opportunity submit these written remarks.

Members of the DC Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs

Commissioner Ada L. Loo, Chair
Commissioner Dana Tai Soon Burgess, Vice Chair
Commissioner Surjeet Ahluwalia
Commissioner Ben Bahk
Commissioner Erick Hosaka
Commissioner Nicholas Lephram
Commissioner Sapna Pandya
Commissioner Laura Shin
Commissioner Martha Watanabe
Commissioner Jed Wulfekotte
