TERM REPORT
2015 - 2019

GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COMMISSION ON
ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN AFFAIRS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To Our AAPI communities

The Governor’s Advisory Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs (GACAPAA) Commissioners who served from 2015 to 2019 wish to express our sincere gratitude to not only Governor Wolf for the opportunity to serve on this important commission, but also to our diverse Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities for the opportunity to work, learn, advocate and fight alongside you. It has been an immense privilege to be able to represent our communities in the highest levels of State Government and it is also a responsibility we all take very seriously. The progress we made and any changes we were able to affect was possible due to the tremendous power possessed by our collective AAPI communities. As the current cohort of commissioners term out in December 2019, we present this report, which documents the work of the Commission from 2015 to 2019. We are excited about the new group of commissioners that will make up the next GACAPAA cohort, and we are confident that they will continue the work that we were fortunate enough to start. We are confident that they will do everything in their power to achieve the Mission of the commission.

Thank you for your trust and support as well as your tremendous service to our AAPI communities in Pennsylvania.

Commission Journey

In 2015, 30 Commissioners from across Pennsylvania came together as the next cohort of the GACAPAA Commission. Over the last four years, this group of Commissioners faced many challenges, which served as lessons learned and can serve as recommendations for the next commission to act on. We have had many successes as well that we will share in this report. In this time together, we have experienced many joys, such as getting to learn more about each other and the communities we represent. It has been an incredible experience to visit AAPI communities across the Commonwealth, and absolute honor to represent GACAPAA at AAPI events throughout the state, meeting community leaders from all regions and also getting to know fellow Commissioners as friends. The journey comes to an end for those of us who started in 2015 and a
new one begins for the Commissioners continuing on and new commissioners. Through this report, we hope to highlight some of what we have seen, learned and experienced during this term.
Commission Highlights

The report will go into more detail about the activities of each Committee and the Commission as a whole, but here are a few highlights:

- Townhalls: Getting out to see the communities across the State
- Tackling the “Model Minority Myth”: Getting in front of this harmful stereotype
- Focusing on Civic Engagement: Getting out the vote and supporting AAPI elected officials
- Engaging Dept. of Education: Getting involved in critical education policies like ESSA
- AAPLES: Highlighting the importance of heritage language and cultural education
- Civil Rights: Combating hate in the State and making Civil Rights a top priority
- Establishing Arts Collective: Showcasing importance of the Arts in every facet of our lives
- Communications Working Group: Sharing updates and keeping the community informed
- Standing up to be counted: Emphasizing the importance of the Census
- Increasing Diversity within Commission: Focusing on representation in all its forms

During our term, we held 15 Townhalls and brought together thousands of community members together to discuss issues affecting our diverse communities.

Report Organization

This report is broken out in the following sections highlighting the commission’s various sub-committees.

1. Overview of the Commission
2. Message from Outgoing and Incoming Executive Directors
3. Term Updates By Committee
4. Conclusions & Commission Recommendations
ABOUT THE COMMISSION

The Governor’s Advisory Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs was created by Executive Order and consists of Commissioners who have been appointed by Governor Tom Wolf. GACAPAA is responsible for advising Governor Wolf on policies, procedures and legislation that have an impact on the diverse Asian American and Pacific Islander communities in Pennsylvania. The Commission also serves as a liaison to federal, state and local agencies to ensure that services affecting AAPIs are effectively utilized and promoted. It is a resource for community groups and provides forums for developing strategies and programs that expand and enhance the civic, social, education, cultural and economic status of AAPI communities. The Commission identifies programs, scholarships, mentoring programs, and resources for the benefit and advancement of AAPIs. The Commission also advocates for policies and legislation that serve the best interests of AAPIs in Pennsylvania.

Governor Wolf welcomes the Commission after we are sworn in.

Mission

The Governor’s Advisory Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs is dedicated to ensuring that State Government is accessible and accountable to the diverse Asian Pacific American communities in Pennsylvania.
Commissioners:

2015 Appointed

Amy Hever  Anna Perng  Anuj Gupta  Archana Kumar  Bibhuti Aryal
Brad Baldia  Carol Wong  Deep Gupta  Dr. Fariha Khan  Dr. Helene Lee
Dr. Shuhua Fan  Dr. Salvador Parco  Dr. Suresh Canagarajah  Dr. Truong Phuong  Hani White
James Wang  Kannu Sahni  Kao Kue  Kay Kyungsun Yu  Kiran Patel
Mia-lia Kiernan  Mila Yochum  Naimah Hares  Nick Shenoy  Pearl Kim
Rob Buscher  Samip Mallick  Sancha Man Rai  Tom Lee  Wen Qin Zhang
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Mid-Term Appointed Commissioners:

- Abbas Badani
- Alka Patel
- Antonia Domingo
- Dr. Anjali Sahay
- Dr. Anupama Jain
- Lanica Angpak
- Marian Lien
- Niken Astari Carpenter
- Padam Rizal
- Richard Ting
- State Rep. Patty Kim
- Stephanie Sun
- Sukanya Mukherjee
- Than Quach
- Wasiullah Mohamed
Organization

In order to achieve this mission, we organized ourselves in the following Committees:

- **Government that Works**
- **Jobs that Pay**
- **Schools that Teach**
- **Civil Rights Task Force**
- **GACAPAA**
- **AAPI Arts Collective**

**Government that Works**

This committee focused on making sure State Government is accessible and accountable to the diverse AAPI communities in Pennsylvania, this committee is chaired by Tom Lee

**Jobs that Pay**

This committee focused on issues related to economic and workforce development opportunities. This committee is chaired by Alka Patel. During this term, this committee was also chaired by: Sukanya Mukherjee and Kannu Sahni.

**Schools that Teach**

This committee focused on issues related to education, this committee is chaired by Helene Lee. During this term, this committee was also chaired by Bibhuti Aryal.
Our Commissioners (current) come from far and wide. We also understand that it is imperative to increase our representation to regions that have growing AAPI and immigrant populations.

**AAPI Arts Collective**

A committee formed to harness the unique power of the Arts and to address the unique needs of the AAPI Arts community. This committee has been chaired by Commissioner Rob Buscher and is in the process of being transitioned to Commissioner Lanica Angpak. The AAPI Arts Collective also includes prominent members of the AAPI Arts community who are not GACAPAA Commissioners.

**Civil Rights Task Force**

The Task Force focused on issues related to Civil Rights and grew out of the needs of the AAPI community as they faced discrimination, incidents of bias, hate, ethnic intimidation, and bullying. It has been chaired by Commissioner Fariha Khan.

**Communications Working Group**

While still in the early stages, this group was brought together to address the critical need to keep the communities informed on GACAPAA activities as well as to stay engaged with our constituents.
through new media, such as Social Media. This group was chaired by the previous Executive Director, Tiffany Chang Lawson and we will look to Commissioners like Dr. Anjali Sahay who has been a key member of this Committee to lead the way in 2020.

Executive Committee

Responsible for overseeing the overall operations and strategy of the Commission. This committee is chaired by the Executive Director of the Commission, Mohan Seshadri.

Details of each Committee and their activities throughout this term are included in this report.
Message from Our Executive Directors

Tiffany - Former Executive Director

Jan 2019

Dear AAPI Community Members, Stakeholders, and Partners:

It is with mixed emotions that I am writing to announce my transition from my position as the Executive Director of the Governor's Advisory Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs to pursue a new opportunity at the PA Department of State as the Director of the newly created Bureau of Campaign Finance and Civic Engagement. It has been a tremendous honor to serve this organization for the past almost six years, and I feel incredibly privileged to have met you along the way.
When I first came on board as a new Executive Director in 2013, I was excited and did not know quite what to expect. Over the years, despite challenges, we have all come together as a community and truly thrived. The issues that mattered most to us such as schools that teach, jobs that pay, government that works, civil rights, and the AAPI arts community drove us closer together, to do better, and to dare to dream bigger.

As we embark on 2019, it marks the 15th Anniversary since the creation of the Commission’s first Executive Order under Governor Rendell’s leadership back in 2004. I am still amazed after all these years at the incredible resiliency of this organization: our diverse AAPI community members who despite being first generation or sixth generation in the United States are striving for greater representation and to ensure the next generation has an easier path; our AAPI organizations and community partners who despite incredible odds continue to serve our AAPI communities with such incredible sensitivity and passion, and the Commissioners who have dedicated so much of their lives, energy, and time, to work together to ensure that AAPIs have a voice in state government, and of course Governor Wolf and the entire administration for their commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

I have no doubt that I am leaving the Commission in capable hands - because I could not have lead the growth of the organization without the support of our phenomenal Commissioners, and the amazing team in Governor Wolf’s Office.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you for the opportunity to serve and work alongside you for the past almost six years. Thank you for the passion, community, and wisdom that you have imparted to my life.

Sincerely,

Tiffany Chang Lawson

Executive Director
Dear API Community Members, Organizations, and Partners:

My name is Mohan Seshadri, and I am the current Executive Director of the Governor's Advisory Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs. I want to start by thanking the commissioners who put a great deal of work into not just making this term report, but also into the years of service on the commission that has allowed for so much material for the term report to cover. I especially want to highlight two people for their selfless advocacy for our communities: Bibhuti Aryal, our outgoing commission chair, who has provided the bulk of labor for both the creation of this report and for the commission in general, and Tiffany Chang Lawson, my predecessor as Executive Director of the commission, without whom none of the work covered in this report would have been possible.

I came into my role as ED of the commission in what has felt like a time of transition, change, preparation, and loss for both the commission and the community in general, most notably the passing of Padam Rizal, a beloved member of the commission and Pennsylvania’s Bhutanese
community. The bulk of my work between coming on board in February 2019 and December 2019 has been dedicated not to immediate needs but in setting up the commission for success for 2020 and beyond: recruiting and onboarding over 20 new commissioners, building plans for statewide engagement with our community on the 2020 Census, restructuring how the commission operates to ensure that our members are productive in a way that doesn’t take away from their ability to take care of themselves, and working with our community organizations and associations to guarantee that if they wish to engage in the many challenges and opportunities 2020 will provide, they have the tools, knowledge, and resources to do so.

I took on this role for a very simple reason: our API communities across the commonwealth deserve to be safe, healthy, and strong, and we do not currently have the capacity and power to ensure that that is the case. Our communities face all the issues other communities in Pennsylvania are dealing with: healthcare access, environmental injustice, immigration issues, civil rights violations, affordable housing, wage theft, religious discrimination, and more, made all the more acute by language issues, a splintered diaspora sectioned off by community and immigration history, lack of representation in the halls of power, and an invisibility and erasure from broader narratives around issues of justice and participation in our democracy. I am incredibly honored to be a very small part of a long tradition of bending the arc of the universe toward justice for our people in Pennsylvania, I am incredibly thankful for our predecessors on the commission and in our communities for their immense work in organizing, educating, and advocating in, by, and for our communities across the commonwealth, and I am incredibly excited to move this work forward with a commission that is so dedicated to representing the broad diversity of the API diaspora in PA, lifting up our most marginalized, and making change for our people. Please see this report both as a catalogue of the amazing work the commission has done over the last four years, and as a promise of what is to come.

All my best,

Mohan
## Executive Committee

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
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<tr>
<td>Alka Patel</td>
<td>Chair, Jobs that Pay</td>
<td>Executive Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Fariha Khan</td>
<td>Chair, Civil Rights Task Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Helene Lee</td>
<td>Chair, Schools that Teach</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rob Buscher</td>
<td>Chair, AAPI Arts Collective</td>
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<td>Tom Lee</td>
<td>Chair, Government that Works</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wasiullah Mohamed</td>
<td>Incoming Chair, GACAPAA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bibhuti Aryal</td>
<td>Outgoing Chair, GACAPAA</td>
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## Past Executive Committee Members

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
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<tr>
<td>Narasimha “Nick” Shenoy</td>
<td>Chair, GACAPAA (2015-2017)</td>
<td>Executive Committee</td>
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<td>Sukanya Mukherjee</td>
<td>Chair, Jobs that Pay</td>
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<td>Kannu Sahni</td>
<td>Chair, Jobs that Pay</td>
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COMMITTEE REPORT – SCHOOLS THAT TEACH

Mission

The Schools that Teach Committee’s mission is to work closely with AAPI communities and educational institutions to study issues impacting access to quality education for AAPI students while working with our personal, professional, academic, and legislative contacts to advocate on behalf of AAPI children and their families to ensure that access to quality education is equitable and affordable.
The guiding principles of the Committee

AAPI communities are some of the fastest growing demographics in the Commonwealth and as such, an increased awareness and engagement with the diversity within our various ethnic and religious identities are critical. The Schools that Teach (STT) committee has focused on expanding educational opportunities and access for APA communities both formally within the K-12 system and higher education as well as in community-based, more informal spaces of learning. In addition, our efforts over this past term has supported efforts to increase representation of APA histories, traditions and experiences within the curriculum as well as in community events.

Major Accomplishments

In service towards these goals, Commissioners have relied on their expertise in a wide range of fields in their professional lives as educators, researchers, directors of non-profit organizations, and in positions within government offices and major corporations.

One of our major accomplishments from this term include the establishment of AAPLES, Asian American and Pacific Islander Language Education Schools. Spearheaded by Dr. Suresh
Canagarajah, a leading researcher and professor in the field of Applied Linguistics and the Director of the Migration Studies Project at the Pennsylvania State University, AAPLES offers networking opportunities for community-organized schools across the Commonwealth that sustain and maintain linguistic and cultural knowledge within immigrant communities that are central to the establishment of strong and positive ethnic identities especially within the second- and later-generations. In addition, these community schools offer opportunities for English language instruction for newer immigrants and academic tutoring for APA students. Many of these heritage language schools are run by volunteers and fill a void within school districts which do not offer instruction in the many languages and dialects within APA communities. AAPLES was created to offer important networking opportunities for these schools, to increase access to private and federal funding, to create spaces to share curriculum, instructional materials and successful pedagogical strategies, and to increase the advocacy power of these schools. In the first two years since the initiative has been launched, two in-person workshops have been offered for the staff of member schools.

*Commissioner Kao Kue conducted interviews with AAPI Immigrant Youth in preparation for a meeting with representatives from the Pennsylvania Department of Education.*

Another important focus has been on an anti-bullying one-page fact sheet in conjunction with the Civil Rights Task Force under the leadership of Dr. Fariha Khan, the Associate Director of the Asian American Studies program at the University of Pennsylvania. Because of the larger political context and more recently, an administration that has consistently framed “Middle Easterners” and “Arabs” as possible threats to the U.S. including a “Muslim ban” on the entry of immigrants from key countries in South Asia and the Middle East, APA communities have become the target of increased racially-motivated hate crimes across the Commonwealth as well as nationally.

In terms of youth, especially those in the K-12 system, this has also translated into increased vulnerability to bullying both inside and outside their schools. The fact sheet is intended to raise awareness for parents, teachers/staff/administrators in public school districts, and students about
the rise in these incidents, strategies and resources to deal with them and to create important spaces of dialogue to support individuals, families and the broader APA communities. As more incidents are reported, they create an important data source to advocate for additional resources at the state and federal level, especially for vulnerable immigrant APA communities.

Two of our Philadelphia Commissioners, Kao Kue and Anna Perng attended one of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission's (PHRC) Monthly Meetings to share testimony about the issues that AAPI youth and families are having in the Philadelphia School District.

Given the high levels of community involvement by Commissioners, STT members have also consistently participated in various multicultural events and festivals in their respective areas. The arts, including film, music, dance and writing, are important spaces for APA representation and consciousness-raising. For example, Commissioner Rob Buscher has served for many years as the Executive Director of the Asian American Philadelphia Film Festival in addition to contributing faculty in universities in the Philadelphia area including Arcadia University and University of Pennsylvania. The annual film festival highlights the work of Asian American artists, filmmakers, and media producers that often are excluded from the mainstream Hollywood industry. Over the last two years, Commissioner Anjali Sahay, an Associate Professor in International Relations and Political Science at Gannon University, has performed traditional Indian dance at multiple venues in the Erie area, both in schools and in public celebrations. The inclusion of APA-oriented performances at the local and state-level help underscore the important contributions of immigrant and ethnic communities in our broader understandings of what makes us Americans. Education doesn't just take place in a classroom, but in a variety of spaces and mediums.

A number of STT members work in the field of higher education, often offering courses and engaging in research that highlight the experiences and histories of APA communities. Over the last two years, Commissioners have given invited talks at various colleges and universities around their research. Given funding cuts in public education at the federal and state-levels, it is a critical
moment to maintain and expand courses within the curriculum that offer APA communities
visibility. As more APA-identified students enter into higher education, APA-focused courses
enable them to see their histories and contributions to the U.S. as legitimate fields of study and
academic engagement.

AAPLES (Asian and Asian Pacific Language
Education Schools)

How we came about this initiative?

In our town hall meetings in 2018, parents from the AAPI community
mentioned that their school districts lacked the resources to help their
children maintain their heritage languages and/or provide additional
support for the teaching of English as a second language. Some parents
mentioned that they had started their own community-based schools to address these needs. The
teachers in these schools were volunteers, who were not formally professionalized. Visits to some
of these schools by commissioners Canagarajah and Rizal also revealed that these teachers needed
help in preparing the curriculum and teaching materials. Furthermore, some communities had to
negotiate with their school districts to obtain space in schools to hold their classes during
weekends. Therefore commissioners in the Schools That Teach (STT) committee explored how they
can step in to help. Since the purview of STT is broad, they started AAPLES to focus on issues
related to community-based schools which teach languages.

Why we believe it is important to AAPI communities?

AAPLES seeks to network the organizers and teachers of community-based schools for Asian and
Pacific Islander children in Pennsylvania. This network is intended to help community-based
schools, which are often isolated, to share their pedagogical resources, analyze best practices, and
develop comparable curriculum. It also will help seek resources to enhance the functioning of the
schools (i.e., funds, space for schools, and curricular materials), share curricular and pedagogical
materials, and combine research with pedagogy to improve instruction. AAPLES has invited
individuals and schools from the AAPI community in the commonwealth to join this network and
share their pedagogical resources (and use those posted electronically), attend workshops and
meetings that are announced, or request any necessary educational and organizational help. The workshops held by AAPLES are designed to professionalize volunteer community teachers, and provide expert help on curriculum development and materials preparation.

What some of the activities we took on under this initiative?

1. AAPLES has started a Facebook page to post information on relevant events, connect community school teachers, and make resources available. The group is at: https://www.facebook.com/groups/342609192966927/about/

2. STT helped negotiate with the Harrisburg school district to renew the availability of a classroom within the school district building for the Bhutanese Community’s Nepali language school.

3. STT has met with PDE a few times to bring to their attention the needs and concerns of the AAPI parents and students.

4. We have held two teacher development workshops. The details are as follows:

   **Nov 3, 2018 (1st workshop)**

   Venue: The Grucci Room, Burrows Building, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA 16802.

   Facilitators: Suresh Canagarajah, Mari Haneda, Anna Kaiper, Chunyuan Di, Soyoung Han, Magda Madany, Miso Kim, Heejin Lee (Faculty and doctoral students in the fields of education, Asian studies, and applied linguistics from Penn State)

   About forty volunteer instructors from community schools in PA met for a day-long workshop at Penn State to discuss the nature of multilingual competence, motivating children to value their heritage languages, power relationships that affect diversity in this country, and dilemmas for identity in the context of migration. There were also activities on preparing materials and motivating students through relevant classroom activities. The participants came from Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Harrisburg, Lancaster, Erie, and State College.
May 4, 2019 (2nd workshop)

Venue: The Desert Room, Keystone Building, 400 North Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102.

Facilitators: Suresh Canagarajah, Ana Tankosic, Sharon Danarajan, Miso Kim, Anna Kaiper, Magda Madany (Faculty and doctoral students in the fields of education and applied linguistics from Penn State)

In the workshop, the facilitators started with a general discussion on attitudes of students and parents towards learning their heritage language vis a vis English. Then the participants shared curricular and pedagogical information and discussed ideas on combining research with pedagogy to improve instruction. The workshop was attended by about twenty language teachers and educators from the Nepali schools in the Harrisburg area.

What we hope to do going forward with the new Commission?

1. We hope to hold teacher development workshops in different cities in the state, in negotiation with commissioners and local schools. Faculty members at Penn State are available to facilitate and run these workshops.

2. We hope to draw new schools and teachers of the AAPI community into the network.

3. We will lobby with PDE and school districts for space and resources for community schools.

4. We will advocate for the continued investment and expansion of Asian American Studies and Ethnic Studies more broadly in the K-12 public school curriculum and at colleges and universities across the Commonwealth.

Key Takeaways from Current Term

Heritage language and cultural education schools are one of the key spaces that preserve ethnic identity construction in immigrant communities, particularly because they are often excluded from the formal curriculum of K-12 schools. The establishment of AAPLES created an opportunity for networking and resource sharing across these informal organizations and hopes to continue to expand offered workshops as well as potential funding opportunities through external grants.
Linked with the AAPLES initiative, STT recognized the need to integrate APA-centered course materials, speakers, performances and programming in the K-12 system by creating a comprehensive resource list for interested educators and administrators. Currently hosted on the Department of Education website, the resource list is difficult to access and it is our hope that we find more productive and useful avenues for promotion.

The nature of the Commission being composed of volunteers who are committed to public service is that involvement can vary considerably as a result. For some folks, their jobs are a natural tie in to education and STT efforts. For others, they are in adjacent fields. The key is to tap into people’s strengths and understand that not everyone will be equally involved in the main initiatives. For example, not everyone was necessarily contributing to AAPLES, the anti-bullying fact sheet or the Nepali afterschool program in Harrisburg, but STT functioned as a space to share information, resources and find ways that we could support the efforts of different Commissioner-led projects.

One of the difficulties is keeping everyone engaged in whatever ways they can be. Monthly scheduled meetings set from the start of the term could help even if not everyone can attend. This was much easier to coordinate if the Chair of STT could set meeting times on fixed date rather than doodle polling each month for availability. Also for the Chair, initiating one-on-one contact for those who are less involved to see what they are working out or ways to encourage more participation could be helpful. But most importantly, acknowledging that momentum has natural cycles was helpful. There are some periods of lots of action and then, quieter time for regrouping and reorganizing our priorities.

**Looking Ahead to Next Term**

While STT has accomplished many goals over the two terms, one of the areas we have struggled is how to access or create a database with disaggregated statistics on APA communities by ethnic groups. As we know, “Asian Americans” and “Pacific Islanders” is a racial identity that encompasses a wide range of national, ethnic, and religious communities. Often the relatively high academic and economic achievements of East Asians, like Chinese, Japanese and Koreans, as well as South Asian Indians become the stand-in for all APAs. This upholds dangerous stereotypes like the “model minority” and obscures the struggles and lack of representation of other ethnic
communities within the APA communities. We would like to keep this on the radar for the incoming members of STT as important work that should be done

Additionally, given the work put in to launch AAPLES, we hope the next Commission will support its’ continued growth. At least one incoming member recommended by Suresh will have expertise in this field so there will be some continuity. It goes without saying that Suresh and other outgoing members of the Commission will be available to support any initiatives, publicize future workshops, and work on recruiting new member schools to AAPLES.

One other important area is for STT to keep focus on the Census 2020, finding ways to outreach to APA communities which historically are undercounted. One avenue might be working through public schools and the AAPLES network to reach out to families and stress importance and implications of participating fully in census.

Committee Contact Information

Helene Lee

Vice Chair, GACAPAA
Chair, Schools that Teach
helenekimlee@gmail.com
Commissioners breaking ground at the Crane Building, new mixed use residential-commercial high rise that was recently completed in Philadelphia's Chinatown

Mission

Building on Governor Wolf’s workforce, education, and economic development strategies, engage with the commonwealth’s AAPI community to:

1. Increase access to these resources;

2. Add cultural context and data to policy dialog (in relevant venues); and

3. Serve as a feedback loop (and voice) to register concerns and success of the community (back to the Governor’s Office)
JTP Commissioners (2015-2019)

Alka Patel - Chair
Sue Mukherjee - Past Chair
Kannu Sahni - Past Chair
Antonia Domingo

Brad Baldia
Hani White
James Wang
Kiran Patel

Marian Lien
Niken Astari Carpenter
Wasiullah Mohamed
Wen Qin Zhang

Term Objectives

1. Develop policy recommendations on strategies to attract Asian firms and assist PA in outreach to Asian firms, government agencies, and individuals

2. Highlight the positive impact made by the AAPI communities in PA

3. Tap into State resources for workforce development opportunities for AAPI communities

4. Develop policy recommendations on strategies to attract Asian firms Assist PA in outreach to Asian firms, government agencies and individuals in order to facilitate

5. Build infrastructure that supports robust, focused, and civic dialog

6. Create benchmarks that support progress for the sub-committee including developing a definition for the AAPI community and constructing economic issues faced by them
Term Outcomes

Attracting Asian Firms to Do Business in PA

1. The Jobs That Pay sub-committee held a planning meeting with the Deputy Secretary Joseph Burke and his team at the Office of International Business Development, PA Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED) to discuss and decide on the ways that GACAPAA could work with DCED and its country representatives to facilitate investment from Asian firms, including formation of trade missions to the target countries of India, Indonesia, China, Philippines and Japan.

2. Commissioner Brad Baldia went to the Philippines as part of a trade mission organized by the Federation of Philippine American Chambers of Commerce in October 2016 to explore opportunities for attracting investment to PA. Contacts made during this visit will be used to develop an outreach plan, as well as a trade mission to the Philippines at a future date.

3. Commissioner Kannu Sahni met with Indian Consul General Riva Ganguly Das to promote Pennsylvania as an investment destination for Indian firms, especially given the emerging opportunities with the Shell natural gas cracking facility. Ambassador Das expressed strong interest, and suggested to Trade Consul Mr. Sreenivasa Rao that he should work towards including a stop in Pittsburgh for the Confederation of Indian Industry trade delegation visiting the US in spring 2017. Also discussed was a potential future trade mission from Pennsylvania to India.

4. Commission participated in and made remarks at the China Partnership of Greater Philadelphia dinner with Ambassador Zhang Qi Yue from the Chinese Consulate in NYC

5. Wednesday, November 29, 2017, the Governor’s Advisory Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs, the PA Department of Community and Economic Development, the Fujian Provincial People’s Government, Fujian Provincial People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, and City of Shishi People's Government came together to host the opening ceremony of Fujian (China) Week in Philadelphia. The Commission is grateful to Acting Secretary of State Robert Torres and John Chin, Chair of the City of Philadelphia's Mayor's Commission on Asian American Affairs for participating.
Workforce Development

1. Commissioner Kannu Sahni had a detailed planning meeting in May 2016 with Vera Krofcheck, Chief Strategy Officer of Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board (serving Western PA), to discuss specific refugee and immigrant employment strategies, new opportunities within the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and language support in the workplace.

2. Commissioner Kannu Sahni had a detailed planning meeting in May 2016 with Vera Krofcheck, Chief Strategy Officer of Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board (serving Western PA), to discuss specific refugee and immigrant employment strategies, new opportunities within the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and language support in the workplace.

3. GACAPAA presented a workshop at the PA Workforce Development Association’s “Shaping the Future” Conference in May 2016 to highlight the importance of preparing services to meet the needs of a diverse workforce, and emphasize the contributions that immigrants and refugees can make if they have the right tools available to them. We also discussed the requirements of WIOA, and presented a case study of Jewish Family and Community Services, an agency doing excellent work in the resettlement of refugees in the Pittsburgh region.

4. The Jobs That Pay sub-committee met with Secretary Kathy Manderino (PA Department of Labor & Industry), to review the development and implementation of strategies to maximize workforce participation of immigrants and refugees in PA, and discuss how the Commission can partner with L&I to promote programs to welcome and upskill immigrants and refugees.

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7. The Jobs That Pay sub-committee met with Deputy Secretary Eileen Cirpriani (PA Department of Labor and Industry) to discuss PA Smart and opportunities for the AAPI communities to connect with available resources.

**JTP in the Community**

5. Commissioner Wen Qin Zhang served on a panel at the Keystone Crossroads second annual Urban Ideas Worth Stealing Conference that was held at the Civil War Museum in Harrisburg on May 10, 2017. The panel was entitled, "Missed Dinner: Approaches to Solving Urban Food Deserts." Commissioner Zhang was able to highlight his perspective as an Asian American multilingual small business owner.

6. Vice Chair and Chair of the Jobs that Pay Committee, Kannu Sahni delivered a presentation on AAPI Communities in Pennsylvania to the Army Corps of Engineers in Pittsburgh on May 25, on behalf of the Governor's Advisory Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs.

7. Executive Director Tiffany Chang Lawson provided a presentation to the U.S. Department of Labor as part of its on-going series of diversity and inclusion programming the agency has been providing for employees. Tiffany is pictured with Rose Holandez, Acting Regional Administrator, U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, Region 3 and Sarah Carle, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Assistant Area Director, Wilkes-Barre Area Office.

8. Members of the Governor's Advisory Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs joined with the Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation (PCDC) and other city and federal officials, stakeholders, and community members, to celebrate the official groundbreaking of their Eastern Tower Community Center (ETCC). Governor Wolf announced in October 2016 a $1.3 million grant to help fund the construction of the ETCC.
This project will create and retain nearly 160 full-time permanent jobs, as well as 500 additional jobs during construction.

9. Tiffany and Commissioner Wen Qin Zhang met with the Chinese Restaurant Association of Greater Philadelphia


11. Commission took part in the Department of State’s Election Policy Summit at the 2017 Farm Show Complex.

12. In May, 2019, Pittsburgh Commissioners participated in an event entitled “AAPI Month: Celebrating 100+ Years of Asian American Contributions in Pittsburgh” which also included Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto.

Highlight the positive impact made by the AAPI communities in PA

1. Former Executive Director, Tiffany Chang Lawson presented to the Society of Asian Scientists and Engineers at their Northeast Regional Conference in Philadelphia. Her presentation was entitled, “The Power of Now” and how young AAPIs can make an impact in their local communities.

“AAPI immigrants make meaningful contributions to the U.S. economy as both taxpayers and consumers. In 2015, households led by AAPI immigrants paid $97.5 billion in
federal taxes and $38.2 billion in state and local taxes, leaving them with $335.8 billion in disposable income or “spending power” to use at U.S. businesses. AAPI households overall held $455.6 billion in spending power that year, and contributed $184 billion in taxes.”

- New American Economy Report - Power of the Purse

2. GACAPAA held a Press Conference with Secretary Dennis Davin, PA Department of Community and Economic Development, Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald, Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition, OCA - Pittsburgh, and All for All in Pittsburgh and national launched the New American Economy’s new report, “Power of the Purse: How Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders Contribute to the U.S. Economy.”

3. GACAPAA, in collaboration with Raise the Wage, held a phone bank in October, 2019 in Pittsburgh, where Pittsburgh Commissioners and AAPI community members made over 1000 calls to AAPI community members to educate and connect them to their respective Senate Offices to encourage them to support raising Pennsylvania’s minimum wage to $15/hr. While having a living wage is critical to many of our AAPI community, it was just as important to get them engaged in the political process.
Creating Benchmarks (Data Analysis)

JTP Collaboration with PASSHE: Assessing the AAPI Population in PA

This report and the corresponding work comes as an outcome of Governor Tom Wolf’s Advisory Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs’ Jobs That Pay Committee. The mission of the Jobs That Pay Committee is to “identify workforce, education, and economic development strategies that help increase access of all members of the AAPI community to family sustaining middle class jobs in Pennsylvania. Strategies adopted by this sub-committee will individually and collectively help ensure at least 60 percent of AAPI community members have some postsecondary education by 2025, a minimum requirement for jobs of the future (that pay) in the commonwealth.” Committee members, in collaboration with the Pennsylvania’s State System of Higher Education and others as identified in the table below, worked tirelessly to compile this comprehensive report, the first in the history of the commonwealth.

Key Takeaways from Current Term

Of all of our committees, this Committee probably faced the most challenges in terms of defining objectives and identifying needs because the “Model Minority” myth makes it seem like the AAPI community has no major economic challenges or issues. However, when we start to scrutinize the data around the relative success of the AAPI community more closely, we clearly see that that this myth assumes that our very diverse AAPI communities are all alike. We know that it could not be further from the truth, however, the way data is aggregated and presented currently, this can be a convenient excuse for institutions, whether government or private, to justify the lack of AAPI representation and services geared toward AAPI populations.

About 45,371 Asian Americans in Pennsylvania (11%) lack health insurance.
About 60,598 Asian Americans in Pennsylvania (16%) live in poverty.

About 1,029 NHPIs in Pennsylvania (25%) live in poverty.

- AAPI Data

The work we did this term to start looking at data more closely, in a disaggregated fashion, tells us that there is much more we need to learn in terms of what the key needs are for our diverse AAPI communities. We cannot take a one-size-fits-all approach. Whether some of our community members are trying to earn a livable wage or whether our young people are trying to find rewarding career opportunities post college, we need to find strategies to meet those needs. It begins with understanding our communities much better.

Looking Ahead to Next Term

1. Build on the work we started around data
2. Continue to fight against the Model Minority myth
3. Continue efforts around workforce development
4. Mentoring for leadership roles in all fields

Committee Contact Information

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Chair, Jobs that Pay
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Committee Report — Government That Works

Former Executive Director Tiffany Chang Lawson participated on a panel alongside John Chin, Executive Director of the Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation during the Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies first Regional Leadership Academy in Pennsylvania in partnership with GACAPAA held in Philadelphia in October 2017.

Mission

The Government that Work’s mission is to work closely with state agencies to ensure that state government remains accessible and accountable to AAPI communities in addition to promote education and outreach to AAPI communities about the importance of civic engagement.

Term Commissioners

Tom Lee, Chair  Anuj Gupta  Deep Gupta  Kay Kyungsun Yu  Naimah Hares
Term Objectives

1. Highlight the need for more comprehensive language access

2. Focus on civic engagement within AAPI communities

3. Look for ways to increase AAPI representation in elected offices

4. Create an inventory of listening sessions and town halls

5. Collect and assess public comment

6. Identify and engage with AAPI stakeholders and cultural brokers

7. Educate to increase participation in government by expanding AAPI stakeholder and cultural brokers engagement in the governance process

8. Develop protocol for an annual meeting with the Governor

9. Identify appointees and hires within communities in key areas

10. Initial pitch for ‘appointees and hires’ ask and secure follow-up meeting(s).

11. Share needs assessment from public comment.

12. Pitch a ‘needs assessment’ ask secure follow-up meeting.
“79% of Asian Americans in Pennsylvania speak a language other than English at home, and of those, more than 47% speak English less than “very well.”

Vote turnout is 9% lower for Limited-English Proficient (LEP) than non-LEP registered voters according to the 2012 AAPI Post-Election Survey, and 63% say that Asian language support at polling places would be useful.”

- 2018 Pennsylvania Data Fact Sheet

Term Outcomes

Civic Engagement

1. Development and implementation of the GACAPAA Judge of Elections Packet and How to Guide with forms.

2. Commissioners led various community-specific GOTV drives to ensure that community members were registered and able to participate in this critical civic right and duty.

By 2020, Asian-Americans and AAPI immigrants will hold considerable voting power in some states. By 2020, an estimated 13.7 million Asian-Americans will be eligible to vote, a group that includes 8 million AAPI immigrants.

- New American Economy Report
Townhalls

Our very first Community Townhall was held in Philadelphia at the University of Pennsylvania in November 2016

1. Friday, November 11, 2016 Philadelphia Community Town Hall held at the University of Pennsylvania - Commissioner Dr. Fariha Khan, Chair of the GACAPAA Civil Rights Task Force Lead

2. Saturday, January 28, 2017 Indonesian Community Town Hall held at the New Life Praise Center - Commissioner Hani White Lead

3. Saturday, February 25, 2017 Korean Community Town Hall held at the Calvary Vision Center - Commissioner Kay Kyungsun Yu Lead

4. Saturday, March 25, 2017 Pittsburgh AAPI Community Town Hall held at the University of Pittsburgh - Commissioner Kannu Sahni, Chair of the GACAPAA Jobs that Pay Committee Lead
5. Sunday, July 16, 2017 Harrisburg AAPI Town Hall held at Royal Buffet & Grille - Commissioner Tom Lee, Chair of the Government that Works Committee Lead

6. Saturday, July 29, 2017 Scranton AAPI Education Town Hall - Commissioner Dr. Shuhua Fan Lead

7. Sunday, August 13, 2017 Northeast Philadelphia AAPI Community Town Hall held at the Phat Bao Temple in Partnership with State Representative Jared Solomon's Office

8. Saturday, September 23, 2017 AAPI Town Hall on English Language Services & Heritage Language Maintenance in Local Schools held at Park Forest Middle School in State College - Commissioner Dr. Suresh Cangarajah Lead

9. Sunday, October 8, 2017 Filipino Community Town Hall held at St. Augustine Church in Philadelphia - Commissioner Brad Baldia Lead

10. Friday, November 10, 2017 Philadelphia AAPI Town Hall held at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Partnership with the Philadelphia Asian American Film Festival - Commissioner Rob Buscher, Chair of the GACAPAA AAPI Arts Collective Lead


12. Sunday, August 19, 2018 Erie AAPI Town Hall held at the City of Erie Municipal Building - Commissioners Niken Astari Carpenter and Dr. Anjali Sahay Co-Leads

13. Friday, November 9, 2018 Philadelphia AAPI Town Hall - Pathways to Pardons held at the University of Pennsylvania - Dr. Fariha Khan, Chair of the GACAPAA Civil Rights Task Force Lead

14. Saturday, July 28, 2018 AAPI Community Symposium held at The State Museum of Pennsylvania - Commissioner Dr. Sukanya Mukherjee, Chair of the GACAPAA Jobs that Committee Lead
15. Saturday, September 7, 2019 AAPI Townhall of Census held at the University of Pennsylvania - Commissioners Stephanie Sun, Marian Lien and Niken Astari Carpenter led the conversation and Commissioner Dr. Fariha Khan helped to organize.

Highlight: AAPI Community Symposium | Harrisburg, PA

The Government That Works sub-committee and its community partners created a first of its kind event in Harrisburg, a Civil Rights Symposium that addressed “un-spoken issues” in the AAPI community such as the opioid epidemic and its effect on our AAPI communities, domestic violence and sexual violence in our AAPI communities, bullying and microaggressions. On July 28, 2018, in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, the Asian American and Pacific Islander Community Symposium took place. The event attracted over 400 attendees from across the state.

Key Takeaways from Current Term

Of all of the Committees, the biggest scope in terms of work we had to do was for our Government that Works Committee. Our Commission’s key charge was to make the State Government more
accessible to our diverse AAPI communities and to relay the needs and concerns of our communities back to the Governor’s Office. This was certainly a big challenge.

The idea that we help to share a Government that Works affects every facet of our lives and depending on the needs of our very diverse communities, it can mean different things to different people. We initially started with the idea that issues like language access and civic engagement would be important, but as we started to work on these areas, we also understood that we needed to get a more detailed understanding of the needs and challenges.

In order to ensure that we were working on the most relevant issues and to also provide a forum for many communities, especially outside the typically represented cities of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, we set on an ambitious agenda of conducting a townhall each month. While we may not have been able to do so each and every month, we came close and the results of the townhalls helped us to re-prioritize our work.

**Looking Ahead to Next Term**

The next term should seek to develop and implement the following initiatives:

1. Review the feedback and recommendations that have been gathered from our 15 Townhalls in order to ensure there is follow-up from the Commission and from the State

2. Ensure that AAPI community members are being appointed to key roles on boards and commissions at the Commonwealth

3. Focus on the Census in order to ensure that our communities are being counted

4. Develop protocol for an annual meeting with the Governor to voice our policy recommendations on an ongoing basis
Committee Contact Information

Tom Lee

Vice Chair, GACAPAA
Chair, Government that Works
tslee.esq@gmail.com
Committee Report – Civil Rights Taskforce

Keynote speaker, Linda Sarsour, activist and one of the co-organizers of the 2017 Women’s March during the Council on American-Islamic Relations-Philadelphia Annual Banquet in 2017

Mission

Through partnership and collaboration with diverse local communities throughout the state, we hope to foster dialogue, raise awareness, and create accountability on all forms of discrimination including issues of race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, gender, and disability as they impact the AAPI community.
Term Commissioners

Dr. Fariha Khan Chair
anupama jain
Archana Kumar
Bibhuti Aryal
Brad Baldia
Hani White
Kannu Sahni
Mia-lia Kiernan
Pearl Kim
Richard Ting
Rob Buscher
Tom Lee

Term Objectives

1. Educate State Government and other constituents about critical issues faced by community members, such as Islamophobia, xenophobia and anti-AAPI bullying in schools
2. Highlight the need for equitable language access services for AAPI communities
3. Create resources for AAPI community members to be able to understand laws around hate crime and how to address hate crimes and incidents
4. Create resources for AAPI community members to understand the available options of support for bullying in the school system and how parents and students can address bullying.
5. Build solidarity across AAPI and other communities of color to tackle Civil Rights issues
6. Provide input to all other areas of the Commission’s work and partner on all Civils Rights issues in terms of education, economy and access to Government services.
Term Outcomes

Public Events

The Committee took part in several community events across the State, including:

- Ramadan Events Around Pennsylvania
  - Turkish Cultural Center of Erie held an Interfaith Iftar Dinner
  - Turkish Cultural Center of Harrisburg and the Peace Islands Institute held an Iftar Dinner
  - Turkish Cultural Center of Pennsylvania held an Interfaith Ramadan Celebration at Philadelphia City Hall
  - The Council on American-Islamic Relations-Philadelphia Chapter is held their 2nd Annual Ramadan Interfaith Iftar Dinner

- Documentary Film Salam Neighbor Screenings. A series of statewide screenings in the Fall of 2016 of documentary film Salam Neighbor.
  - Philadelphia Film Screening collaboration with the Asian American Studies Department at the University of Pennsylvania (Organized by Commissioner Khan)
  - Erie Film Screening collaboration with Film Society of Northwest Pennsylvania, Erie Asian Pacific American Association and GACAPAA (Organized by Commissioner Kumar) - Erie Commissioner Archana Kumar organized a community roundtable discussion with community leaders from the Erie faith community as well as Muslim leaders in the Greater Erie region.

- Harrisburg Listening Session
  - Harrisburg Commissioner Tom Lee organized a listening session that was held at Widener Commonwealth Law School and was televised on PCN. The Commission also partnered with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, Pennsylvania State Police, Governor’s Office of Homeland Security, Steelton Borough Police Department, the Islamic Society of Greater Harrisburg (ISGH), Community
Responders Network and Muslims of Central PA to hold a Civil Rights Workshop on December 16, 2016 at ISGH.

- Philadelphia Community Forum
  - Philadelphia Commissioners Rob Buscher, Fariha Khan and Hani White organized a Community Forum at the Al Aqsa Mosque.

- Pittsburgh Meeting with Islamic Center
  - Pittsburgh Commissioner Kannu Sahni and Bibhuti Aryal organized a meeting with the Islamic Center of Pittsburgh to discuss issues faced by the diverse Islamic community in Pittsburgh and how the commission could collaborate with ICP and the community. Furthermore, they organized meetings with the Pittsburgh Council of Higher Education to discuss the rise of Islamophobia, and what the Commission can do to address that as well as finding ways to partner with Higher Ed institutions in the Pittsburgh region.

- Governor Tom Wolf and First Lady Frances Donnelly Wolf hosted the 2nd Annual Eid al-Adha dinner for Muslim Community Leaders in PA at the Governor’s Residence in Harrisburg. Commissioners Hani White and Fariha Khan were in attendance.

- Celebrating Diwali & Tihar - In October 2017 Governor Wolf and First Lady Frances Donnelly Wolf hosted the inaugural Diwali & Tihar Dinner Celebration at the Governor’s Residence in Harrisburg and Committee member Bibhuti Aryal along with Executive Director Tiffany Chang Lawson attended the event along with guests across the state. This event has become an annual tradition that is appreciated by many.

- Members of the Governor's Advisory Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs joined together to purchase a table in support of the Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Pennsylvania’s 33rd Annual Banquet. Members of the Commission are pictured with Vanita Gupta, former Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General and head of the Civil Rights Division at the U.S. Department of Justice. Ms. Gupta currently serves as the President and CEO of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights.

- Commissioners Rob Buscher, Carol Wong, Brad Baldia, Fariha Khan, and Kao Kue attended the Japanese American Citizens League of Greater Philadelphia’s Uprooted Exhibition Opening and Day of Remembrance Event.
Council on American Islamic Relations – Philadelphia Chapter’s 11th Annual Banquet. Jalila Parker ED of the Governor’s African American Affairs Commission and I attended and staffed Governor Wolf and First Lady Frances Wolf who attended the reception. Commissioners Dr. Fariha Khan, and Hani White were also in attendance.

Civil Rights Workshops & Seminars

Harrisburg At the end of November 2016 the Islamic Society of Greater Harrisburg (ISGH) received a hate letter and the Commission wanted to ensure that this community felt supported. Executive Director Tiffany Chang Lawson worked in collaboration with the ISGH to host a Civil Rights Workshop on December 16, 2016. The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, Governor’s Office of Homeland Security and the Pennsylvania State Police participated in this event.

Asian Pacific American Bar Association-PA’s Crime Prevention Seminar

In collaboration with the Asian American Studies Program at the University of Pennsylvania and hotpot! Philly, we held a Community Town Hall on April 15, 2017 to hear from our AAPI LGBTQ+ community. We were joined by Pennsylvania's Physician General, Dr. Rachel Levine, Geoffrey Biringer Director of Education and Community Outreach for the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, Randy Duque, Deputy Director of the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations, and Amber Hikes, Executive Director of LGBT Affairs for the City of Philadelphia. This effort was led by University of Pennsylvania students Nancy Wong and Caroline Kim with the support of Commissioner Dr. Fariha Khan, Chair of the Commission's Civil Rights Taskforce.

Commissioner Dr. Khan attended the Asian Home Invasions Crime Prevention Seminar held in Chinatown, Philadelphia

Commissioners Brad Baldia, Rob Buscher, Hani White, and Dr. Fariha Khan attended several meetings of the Philadelphia Intra-Agency Civil Rights Task Force Meetings in conjunction with local police and FBI and (PHL-IACRTF).
Commissioners Brad Baldia, Rob Buscher, Hani White, and Dr. Fariha Khan attended several meetings of the Arab/ Muslim/ Sikh/ Hindu/ Asian Working Group.

Dr. Fariha Khan also attended bi-monthly meetings of the Philadelphia Intra-Agency Civil Rights Task Force Meetings hosted by the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations, Community Relations Division.

Commission participated in a panel on racial justice at the YWCA of Greater Harrisburg

Committee Chair, Dr. Fariha Khan coordinated a meeting as part of the Report Hate project at The Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia

Commissioner Rob Buscher conducted a sensitivity training for a group of Sheraton employees after an incident during the JACL National Conference that took place in Philadelphia. The incident, in which an employee wrote the letters “Jap” to abbreviate an identifier for an attendee of the JACL conference, had no intention of being derogatory towards the attendee or the conference, but it was clear that the employees were not aware of the sensitivities regarding certain words and phrases used for hate. Commissioner Buscher was able to provide history, context and suggestions on how they better serve guests from a diverse background and avoid similar issues in the future.

Resources Created by the Committee

- Hate Crime Info Sheet – Document to define Hate Crimes and Hate Incidents and resources to assist community members. To be translated into several languages.

- Islamophobia One Pager – Document to explain what Islamophobia is, how it is perpetrated and how Community members can fight back.

- Bullying One Pager - in partnership with Schools that Teach defines bullying and lists resources available for both parents and students. Can be modified for various age levels. To be translated into several languages.

External Communications by the Committee

- On June 23, 2017, it marked 35 years since Vincent Chin was murdered and this was recognized in our June Newsletter.
We supported Governor Wolf when he firmly stood against the Trump Administration’s travel ban. In January we initiated our Inspector of Elections effort from our Government that Works committee, this lasted until May when the primary elections were held.

- GACAPAA Letter in Support of DREAMers – The Commission penned a letter in support of DREAMers
- Letter by Advisory Commissions in support of Stand United Against Hate
- Letter by Commission in support of Peace for the Korean Peninsula

**Key Takeaways from Current Term**

We knew at the beginning of our term that our AAPI communities have faced and will continue to face Civil Rights issues as it relates to discrimination and potential violence. However, the past four years have certainly highlighted this even more sharply. This committee was formed as a Task Force, but given the social and political climate and rhetoric, we feel strongly that this Task Force should become a permanent committee.

The work of this group cuts across all areas of our AAPI lives because discrimination happens in our schools, in workplaces, in our places of worship and everywhere in-between. Every facet of our work needs to be considered with a lens of Civil Rights. We have also seen in the past four years that we must work side by side with other communities of color, not only to provide strength in numbers, but also as a way to bridge the divides that we know exist between our communities. When we fight together as one, we believe that we have a much better chance of creating a Commonwealth that respects the lives of all of its citizens.

**Looking Ahead to Next Term**

The work of this Committee will continue to be critical for the Commission and our AAPI communities. From our experience in this term, we have identified some items that we would like the incoming Commission:

7. The Civil Rights Task Force should be elevated to full committee status in order to recognize the significance of civil rights advocacy role that the Commission fulfills.
8. The Task Force recommends that Governor Wolf take immediate action to shut down the Berks County Residential Center in light of the recent review published by PA Auditor General Eugene DePasquale on December 11, 2019:
https://www.paauditor.gov/Media/Default/Reports/RPT_BCRC_Berks_Center_121119_FINAL.pdf

9. Continue to work closely with each of the other Committees on Commissions in order to tackle Civil Rights issues in one coordinated effort.

10. Continue to work closely with the other Commissions across the state in order to tackle Civil Rights issues regardless of what community is being impacted.

11. Continue to work closely with the Department of Education and Center for Safe Schools to ensure equitable access to education and services.

12. Continue to work closely with the Human Relations Commission to ensure open communication on discrimination and to ensure civil rights of all communities of color.

Committee Contact Information

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Mission

The Pennsylvania AAPI Arts Collective represents the interests of Asian American & Pacific Islander artists, musicians, theater artists, filmmakers, arts administrators, arts educators, and all other creatives who make their living through the arts. The Arts Collective advocates for increased opportunities for artists and seeks to implement programs facilitating better collaboration, resource sharing, and capacity building on behalf of all AAPI artists. We also seek to incorporate arts into the educational curriculum to benefit AAPI students as well as the general Commonwealth of PA.
Term Committee Members (2015 - 2019)

Rob Buscher  
Chair

Aisha Khan

Anjali Sahay

Brad Baldia

Bibhuti Aryal

Carol Wong

Catzie Vilayphonh

Dr. Fariha Khan

Gayle Isa

Hani White

Kao Kue

Lanica Angpak

Melody Wong

Samip Malick

Underfunded, Underserved

The following is information gathered during the fact-finding phase that led to the creation of the Pennsylvania Asian American & Pacific Islander Arts Collective as an official committee within Governor Wolf’s Advisory Commission on APA Affairs.

“The Top 20 Foundations awarded only $11.1 million to AAPI-led Arts/culture/media organizations in the period of 1990-2002 nationwide. A majority of these grants were for small amounts under $20,000”

The Arts Collective was created out of a perceived lack of attention to the unique concerns of AAPI community members working in the creative economy, which did not fit neatly within Governor Wolf’s three main focus areas of Schools that Teach, Jobs that Pay, and Government that Works. As
such, a considerable amount of effort went into defining what the committee would be and how it could effectively serve the needs of this underserved community.

There are several major challenges that the vast majority of artists face regardless of which ethnic community they come from such as irregular income, minimal job security, lack of health insurance, and lack of retirement planning. A majority of working artists rely on multiple sources of income that often consist of freelance project-based work. Those who opt for a formal education in the arts are often saddled with college debt they have no real chance of paying off, making it difficult to do things like start a family or acquire a home mortgage loan.

Philadelphia Suns performing at the Closing Reception of Philadelphia Asian American Film Festival.

Considering their innumerable contributions to our daily lives, artists are among the most undervalued profession in our society. Who creates the music we listen to, the television and cinema we watch, the literature we read, and designs the many objects we use in daily life? The creative economy in Pennsylvania is an untapped resource that if supported properly through additional government resources could yield exponential results to the Commonwealth economy at-large with zero to low environmental impact.
Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders working in this field are even less likely to have access to the kinds of resources required to live stable and productive lives that include basic necessities other professionals take for granted. While there have been some gains in recent decades, According to Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy’s publication “Growing Opportunities”, AAPIs received only .4% of the total philanthropic dollars spent between 1990 and 2002. AAPIs are the fastest growing racial demographic in the United States at 18 million - over 5% of the total population, and 3.2% of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania population as recorded in the 2010 census.

According to the same report, while 24% of AAPI-focused grants by Top 20 Foundations go towards Arts/Culture/Media, significant dollars support large arts institutions, such as museums, or funding research and university departments in the name of serving AAPI communities, which compete with community-based nonprofit arts organizations. The Top 20 Foundations awarded only $11.1 million to AAPI-led Arts/culture/media organizations in the period of 1990-2002 nationwide. A majority of these grants were for small amounts under $20,000.

By comparison, Philadelphia-based funder Wyncote Foundation awarded $8 million in 2015 to Philadelphia Film Society, which financed their purchase of the Prince Music Theater (now Philadelphia Film Center). The same amount would have completely funded all staff, program, and facilities expenses at Asian Arts Initiative (Pennsylvania’s largest AAPI arts organization) for five years. For Philadelphia Asian American Film Festival, the largest festival of AAPI arts and culture on the East Coast (and third largest in the continental USA), the same amount is equal to about 100 times its current annual budget.

While these figures are staggering, they are not altogether surprising given that many of the Commonwealth’s funders are predominantly white in their board and staff composition, which is
largely reflected in the arts organizations they fund. This is by no means a Pennsylvania issue, as cities and states around the country grapple with issues of equity in the arts. However, it is clear that much more needs to be done to support the AAPI creative economy to ensure its continued success.

While 24% of AAPI-focused grants by Top 20 Foundations go towards Arts/Culture/Media, significant dollars support large arts institutions, such as museums, or funding research and university departments in the name of serving AAPI communities, which compete with community-based nonprofit arts organizations.

Another major barrier to entry for AAPIs in the creative industries is lack of support from their family and extended community, largely due to the perception that there are no viable career options in the arts. While there are many Asian Americans whose families have been in the United States for four or more generations, who might be more inclined to support an aspiring artist in their family, the vast majority of Pennsylvania’s Asian population are either immigrants or their American-born children. As in all immigrant cultures, arts are not viewed as a priority to many families who are struggling to make ends meet in their new home. Asian immigrant parents often encourage their children to pursue high-earning STEM field professions that leave little time for creative exploration.

In recent years there have been more opportunities for younger generations of Asian Americans to see themselves reflected in media and popular culture, but the success stories are few and far between. More intentional support to the AAPI artist community from mainstream funders and arts institutions could help pipeline working artists into more stable artist careers, which could also encourage the community to be more supportive of their artists.

Guiding Principles

During the past four years the following priorities were established to guide the efforts of the Arts Collective:
1. Advocate for increased funding opportunities for individual artists and AAPI community-based arts organizations.

2. Convene artists and creative professionals to network, share resources, and collectively build capacity as arts entrepreneurs.

3. Spread awareness about existing government services and funding opportunities in the Commonwealth of PA.

In order to achieve our strategic objectives, it was necessary to expand committee membership beyond the Commissioners to include a number of working artists and other individuals whose subject matter expertise has been necessary for the Arts Collective to function effectively. Since its inception, committee members have represented a diverse group of mediums within the industry such as arts education, arts administration, curation, stage production, spoken word poetry, and filmmaking. We hope this can be a model for other committees to use in the future in building working groups that are a hybrid between Commissioners and non-commissioner subject matter experts.

In part this was also necessitated by the lack of capacity from Commissioners who were otherwise engaged in the other committees. Unfortunately, the arts continue to take a lower priority compared to the STT, JTP, and GTW subcommittees – despite its relevance to all three of these areas. If the Arts Collective is to remain a part of the commission after its current chair terms out, there needs to be additional support from the Commissioners.

Major Accomplishments

Philadelphia AAPI Artist Summit

On June 26, 2016 the AAPI Arts Collective hosted an afternoon-long summit where visual artists, musicians, filmmakers, poets, dancers, theater artists, arts administrators, educators, presenting organizations, and other interested parties came together to discuss pressing issues facing members of our community in these industries.

Using an innovative meeting format called open space technology we invited each of the seventy-five plus attendees to prioritize various subjects they wished to discuss during our
afternoon summit. The result was about a dozen unique subjects ranging from difficulty accessing exhibition space, to funding challenges, and issues related to attracting audience members from our own ethnic communities. After discussing in each of the subgroups we spent the last half hour reporting back to the entire group, setting next steps and action items where possible.

Each of the host committee members who were present was greatly impacted by the openness of our participants and quality of discussion that took place. Through this summit we were able to better understand the concerns of our community and begin to prioritize the issues that our artists are facing here in the Commonwealth. The feedback gathered at this summit laid the groundwork that guided the direction of the Arts Collective in the three years since.

The Arts Collective collaborated again with Asian Arts Initiative on October 23, 2017 to host a follow up to the summit that was held the previous year. Artists of many disciplines came together to discuss the state of Asian American art in Philadelphia. One highlight was the pitch session at the end of the event that allowed attendees a couple minutes to describe their latest project with the hope of attracting additional collaborators. While there were several different artist mediums present, the majority of pitches involved theater projects.

In 2018 the Artist Summit morphed into the Artist Town Hall series that Asian Arts Initiative has been hosting quarterly into 2019. The new format consists of open format networking, a performance, pitch sessions, and presentations by other arts partner organizations. Arts Collective has brought PA Council on the Arts representative Dana Payne to several of the Town Hall events to present on relevant PCA grant opportunities. The series continues to build capacity of the Philadelphia AAPI artist community and has led to several interesting collaborations.

**Philadelphia Asian Performing Artists Advisory Council**

Established in 2014 as a reaction to the yellowface controversy surrounding Philadelphia-based Lantern Theater Company’s production of Julius Caesar (set in Feudal Japan), Philadelphia Asian Performing Artists has become the de-facto affinity group for Asian American theatre artists in Southeast PA. Largely attributed to the advocacy efforts and guidance of prolific Japanese Canadian theatre director Rick Shiomi who has been engaged in a multi-year residency in Philadelphia 2014-2017, PAPA has grown into a full-fledged production troupe. Over the course of 2017, Arts Collective Chair Rob Buscher worked with PAPA leadership to develop a Community
Advisory Council that has helped to sustain its growth beyond Shiomi’s residency, and continue creating a space for AAPI artists within Philadelphia’s vibrant theatre scene.

In Jan/Feb 2018, Arts Collective helped to promote Tiger Style! the first fully produced theater production by Philadelphia Asian Performing Artists. Based on audience surveys, nearly half of the AAPI audience members who attended had never previously attended a theater production.

In November 2018 Arts Collective helped to integrate three local AAPI Theater Performances by Philadelphia Asian Performing Artists into the 2018 Philadelphia Asian American Film Festival. The partnership continued in 2019 and has been renewed for the 2020 festival cycle.

**Turandot Yellowface Controversy**

In August 2016 tensions flared between the AAPI theater community in Southeastern Pennsylvania and Opera Philadelphia over an advertising campaign promoting the five-show production of Turandot that was scheduled to run September 23 – October 2, 2016.

Italian composer Giacomo Puccini composed Turandot in 1924, at a time when few Westerners had the privilege of traveling to China. Having never visited China himself, Puccini’s fictitious imagination of the exoticized setting is inspired by Orientalist fantasies and appropriation of Asian culture. The character design and plot draw heavily from pervasive negative stereotypes used to maintain European perceptions of racial and cultural superiority meant to justify colonial subjugation in that era.

Opera Philadelphia met with members of the AAPI theater community in Philadelphia, representatives from the Japanese American Citizens League, and Arts Collective Chair Rob Buscher. This meeting was initiated after the local AAPI community in Philadelphia learned of the online advertisements that Opera Philadelphia had incorporated to market their production of Turandot through the use of Yellowface, Orientalist costumes, and the phrase, “A beautiful, exotic adventure” in their marketing message. The word exotic is also a loaded term for most Asian Americans, because it suggests foreignness and cultural inferiority when used to describe our communities.

Yellowface is a form of theatrical makeup to make a non-Asian person appear East Asian. It is similar to the antiquated practice of using blackface to represent an African American performer and carries with it the same traumatic meaning for the Asian American community as it does for
the African American community. After lengthy discussions with these representatives of the local AAPI community, Opera Philadelphia conceded the following in an earnest attempt to remedy the situation:

1. The promotional video and still photographs featuring Caucasian actors in Yellowface were removed from their website.

2. Opera President David Devan agreed to personally review all makeup designs with the makeup artist and either modify or completely remove the offensive stereotypical Fu Manchu mustaches on characters Ping, Pang, and Pong.

3. The word "exotic" was removed from all promotional materials.

4. Members of the AAPI community were invited to attend dress rehearsal and submit written feedback on any additional offensive portrayals.

5. Provided space in the lobby for two poster displays about the history of Yellowface.

6. Published "Watching Turandot with Modern Eyes", a critique by Bi Jean Ngo, Creative Director of Philadelphia Asian Performing Artists as a program insert.

7. Published additional critiques by Rob Buscher and other AAPI community members on the Opera Philadelphia website

8. Participated in interviews with local and national publications for articles regarding the production.

9. Included a discussion of the problematic use of Yellowface in “Between the Notes” audience talkback event.

10. Bring this discussion about negative portrayals of Asian characters to the National Opera Conference.
It is never easy to have these conversations, for either party involved. As a Commission, we commend the local theater artists for their courage in standing up against this deep-rooted issue within the industry of their livelihoods, and thank them for having the patience to use this as a teaching moment.

We would also like to recognize Opera Philadelphia and specifically President David Devan for their willingness to engage in critical dialogue, their openness to listen to constructive feedback, and to meaningfully address the issues within the production of Turandot that concerned the AAPI community. These were hopefully the first steps toward building a better, more inclusive theater community in Philadelphia and the Commonwealth of PA.

**Artist Bash Series**

In 2017 the Barnes Foundation began hosting an on-going series of events highlighting the region’s diverse artist community called the Artist Bash. Held on May 13 and September 15, 2017 both events featured Asian American artists who participated in the 2016 Artists Summit and were given this high-profile performance opportunity as a result of the recommendation from Arts Collective Chair Rob Buscher.

During the May 13th event Taiwanese-Japanese sculptor and filmmaker Eiko Fan screened her experimental dance film Three Stories, in addition to a live dance performance featuring her original wood-carved costumes from the film. On September 15 female spoken-word duo Yellow Rage, comprised of Korean American Michelle Myers and Lao American Catzie Vilayphonh performed a selection of three poems as part of that evening’s events.

Arts Collective continued to participate in the Artist Bash Series at Barnes Foundation bringing 2018 featured acts that included Chinese shadow puppeteer Hua Hua Zhang, Japanese American hip hop artist G Yamazawa, and Cambodian American Girls Empowering traditional dance troupe into the series. 2019 events have featured Asian American folk group No No Boy and breakdancing crew Hip Hop Fundamentals featuring Chinese Bermudan dancer Mark Wong.

The most recent event in the series took place on Saturday November 16, which featured multiracial Okinawan electronic musician Marina Murayama in a special collaboration during the Philadelphia Asian American Film Festival. Murayama was also one of the Philadelphia Asian
Performing Artists 2019 Mini-residency artists, a program that was developed in part with the advice of Arts Collective Chair Rob Buscher. Filipino American turntablist DJ Roli Rho was also featured at this event as part of a two-day celebration of Asian American Hip Hop during the 2019 PAAFF.

**AAPI Theater Artist and Filmmaker Mixers**

In response to feedback from both the AAPI filmmaker and theatre artist communities at the 2016 Artists Summit, Arts Collective hosted two mixer events on May 7 and August 24 to encourage these groups to intermingle. Approximately 75 individuals attended between both events and as a result several theatre projects and at least one short film were developed by local artists.

Mixer events have continued sporadically throughout the past several years, and the most recent event took place on August 12, 2019 at Fleisher Art Memorial.

**Original Works Commissioned by PAAFF**

Inspired in part by the Arts Collective, the 2017 PAAFF featured several new original works that the festival commissioned from local AAPI artists as its program has expanded to incorporate theatre productions and musical performances. The choice to hire local artists was deliberate to both support the local artist economy, and more importantly to create works that might allow Commonwealth artist residents to carry our stories elsewhere.

San Francisco’s Center for Asian American Media collaborated with PAAFF and local artists to create a new original soundtrack for a program of Chinese American home movies spanning 1920-1975 called Memories to Light. Featuring a multi-ethnic ensemble of musicians, Chinese immigrant and Erhu (Chinese fiddle) virtuoso Qin Qian served as the composer and band leader. The performance was hosted on November 12 at the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania campus.

Another highlight was the staged reading of TRAITOR, a new stageplay written by Filipino American filmmaker Steven de Castro and featuring an ensemble cast of 15 Philadelphia actors. Based on the true story of US Army Corporal David Fagen, an African American soldier who defected to the Filipino rebels during the Philippine-American War – this play is one of the only known pieces that allow the Asian American and African American communities to share the
The one-night staged reading was hosted November 13 at InterAct Theatre, and was enjoyed by a nearly sold-out crowd comprised of both communities represented on stage. There are currently talks to mount a full production of the piece in Philadelphia at some point in the future.

The crowning achievement of the 2017 PAAFF was the new original score to 1919 film The Dragon Painter that PAAFF commissioned from composer Goh Nakamura. Starring Japanese immigrant actor Sessue Hayakawa, The Dragon Painter is arguably the first Asian American film produced by a Hollywood studio. Starring an all Japanese American cast, the film was Hayakawa’s attempt at creating a more authentic portrayal of Japanese culture that would juxtapose the negative stereotypes that proliferated that era. Japanese American composer Goh Nakamura was chosen for this project because of his experience in film scoring and innovative indie rock guitar stylings, which resulted in a unique blend of traditional and contemporary that has led to a resurgence in the film’s popularity. Since the new soundtrack’s debut at the 2017 PAAFF, Goh Nakamura has gone on to perform it at several major festivals throughout the country including Chicago’s Foundation of Asian American Independent Media, San Francisco’s Center for Asian American Media Film Festival, Seattle Asian American Film Festival, Boston Asian American Film Festival, and Toronto Reel Asian Film Festival.

Miscellaneous Activities

- Increased participation in the 2018 PAAFF by brokering complimentary Industry Access badges for local AAPI artists.
- Helped promote and coordinate the inaugural Music of Asian America Conference at PAAFF 2018.
- Helped to promote the exhibit on the history of anti-Asian racial propaganda titled American Peril: Imagining the Foreign Threat at Twelve Gates Art Gallery.
- Advocated for woodworker Mira Nakashima to win the Lifetime Achievement Award given by Governor Wolf as part of the Governor’s Arts Award in 2018.
Participated in and promoted Asian Arts Initiative 25th anniversary programming throughout 2018.

Expanded activities to Erie through the work of Commissioner Anjali Sahay.

Provided consultation support to Pittsburgh’s Silk Screen Film Festival in wake of on-going sexual harassment scandal.

Provided ongoing consultation to the Opera Philadelphia company regarding the artwork and casting of their planned 2020 production of Madame Butterfly.

Began conversations with William Penn Foundation and Knight Foundation representatives to advocate on behalf of additional AAPI specific funding streams.

Met with City Theatre representatives to provide guidance and outreach support to the AAPI community in Pittsburgh for their production of Cambodian Rock Band in July 2019.

**Looking Ahead**

In many conversations and convenings held throughout this term, the common concerns amongst individuals of all disciplines are lack of resources and difficulty in obtaining press coverage (although the latter seems to apply for all AAPI-specific issues/events). Without a budget of our own it is difficult to address these issues, but the Arts Collective has been successful in leveraging partnerships with other organizations to accomplish our goals.

We have developed an excellent rapport with the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts who have increased their outreach and inclusion of AAPI communities in their many public grant funding streams. However, an issue that has not seen much traction is our inability to build relationships with private foundations. A top priority for the next Arts Collective Chair should be meeting with private funders to discuss how AAPI arts organizations can improve their competitiveness in grant applications, and bring our community’s unique challenges to their attention.

Aside from some efforts in Erie to support local AAPI artists, we have been unsuccessful in expanding Arts Collective efforts to a substantial degree beyond the Southeast Pennsylvania region. With a new cohort of Commissioners joining the Governor’s Commission in October 2019 we are hoping to expand these activities to other regions of the Commonwealth.
Another top priority of the Arts Collective is to continue working with the other committees to help integrate arts and culture throughout the commission’s work.

With that in mind, Arts Collective should focus on the following activities in 2020 and beyond:

1. Expand regional diversity of programming and events, specifically targeting the Pittsburgh and Harrisburg areas.

2. Cultivate and build upon the network established through the Artists Summit and continue follow up events.

3. Convene meetings with private foundation representatives to discuss increased funding opportunities for AAPI artists in the Commonwealth.

4. Work with other Commission Committees to host arts centric events at universities and other public spaces throughout the Commonwealth.

5. Integrate cultural programming into the work of other Commission Committees when appropriate.

6. Promote the activities of AAPI arts organizations and individual artists working in the Commonwealth.

While we are limited in capacity without funding, Arts Collective was able to realize these accomplishments by utilizing our relationships with other presenting arts organizations to create a robust year of programming. To continue to be successful, the Arts Collective must continue to build upon this model, collaborating with additional partner organizations to achieve our goals. However, it is necessary for the Governor’s Office to consider the message they are sending to our underserved artists in this historically marginalized community when the entirety of the Collective’s work (and the Commission as a whole) is being done by at the expense of volunteer labor from a vulnerable class of people.
Committee Contact Information

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Mission

The Communications Working Group strives to educate the broader Commonwealth community on the issues affecting the AAPI communities while also highlighting the contributions of our diverse community in making Pennsylvania a great place to live, work and play. The Communications Working Group achieves this by highlighting legislations that affect our communities, showcasing events by the Commission and AAPI organizations and by highlighting individuals that make a positive impact for all in Pennsylvania.

Term Commissioners

Abbas Badani  Anjali Sahay  Bibhuti Aryal  Naimah Hare
Term Objectives

From our first townhall conducted in Philadelphia at the University of Pennsylvania, we heard from a lot of community members that they wanted to know more about the Commission, hear what we were involved in, how people can engage with the Commission and also to hear about any potential legislation that could affect the AAPI communities. Based on that feedback, we set out to do the following in 2017:

- Form a group within the Commission to address these needs
- Start a regular Email newsletter to begin communicating externally
- Study ideas for improving on this for the coming years

Term Outcomes

Despite being the smallest of our committees in terms of numbers, this group had some significant activity in this Term, and we are proud of the following key achievements:

1. Created an internal guideline for how the committee should operate

2. 10 Monthly Newsletter were sent along with several notices regarding key pieces of legislation

3. Grew our email distribution from less than 100 to nearly 2,000 from 2017 through 2019

4. Promoted countless events across the states including: Townhalls, Festivals, Rallies and more

5. Highlighted 11 Commissioners through our Commissioner Spotlight feature and shared information on the work each of these individuals is doing with the Commission as well as in their personal and professional roles

6. Shared important information numerous bills before the general assembly that would greatly impact our AAPI communities

7. Created a public GACAPAA Facebook Page where we are able to interact with the community in newer and more creative ways
Key Takeaways

Although the Communications Working Group is not an official Committee of the Commission, based on the feedback we received from townhalls and from community members, we realized that we needed to do a better job of highlighting not only what the Commission is about and what it does, but also the amazing AAPI organizations and individuals that contribute to the diversity and richness of Pennsylvania. With that, we set out to achieve the following Mission.

What we learned from the work of this group this year was that it can be challenging to put out communications on a consistent basis, but it makes a big impact. Not only are we able to promote events and highlight people, but we are able to bring attention to legislation that could negatively impact our communities. We are also aware that we can do better in this, and we seek your feedback and opinion to improve. If you have any suggestions, ideas or may even want to help, please contact us at: ra-asianam@pa.gov

Looking Ahead

The focus of this committee for the current term was to get something started, learn and try to improve. Based on what we learned this year, we know that this is an important function of the Commission. We are looking at the following ideas for 2020 and beyond:

1. Use the availability of media like YouTube to share more visual content

   Look to create content in language for diverse AAPI communities to share information about critical State Government matters

2. Further Expand Social Media communications by adding: Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn accounts

3. Put our more regular updates (Quarterly Reports) that can be accessed from our website

4. Seek to build relationships with local media regionally so that we can highlight issues affecting our communities as well as highlighting the positive impacts made by AAPIs
CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Looking Back

It has been quite a journey for the Commissioners who are rolling off after this term. As you have seen from this report, we have faced quite a few challenges, but have also experienced many highs. It is truly a rewarding experience to be able to advocate for our AAPI communities. As we wrap up this report, we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge one special Commissioner who has done so much in Pennsylvania for all AAPI communities. Narasimha “Nick” Shenoy served as the Chair of the Commission from 2015-2017. Nick’s role in the Commission goes beyond just being the Chair, he is one of the key individuals who advocated for years to ensure that AAPI communities have a commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs in Pennsylvania State Government. It will take nearly another report to list out Nick’s accomplishments through the years and his contributions to our communities, but we do want to say that his leadership, his mentorship and his presence has been crucial to all we have been able to accomplish.

On Thursday, August 31, 2017, Mayor Jim Kenney, Councilman David Oh, Councilwoman Helen Gym and members of the Governor's Advisory Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs, Asian American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Philadelphia, Council of Indian Organizations in Greater Philadelphia, Mayor's Commission on Asian American Affairs, and the Pan Asian Association of Greater Philadelphia gathered together in a surprise ceremony to celebrate former Chair of the Governor's Advisory Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs, Narasimha "Nick" Shenoy to thank him for his over twenty-five years of dedicated service to the AAPI communities in Pennsylvania. It has been an honor to serve alongside Nick and we are grateful for all he has done for us.

Looking Ahead

In December 2019, all of the remaining Commissioners who joined in 2015 will be finishing up their service. We believe that many of the initiatives that have started under this term will be continued, but we also know that the new Commissioners will bring new ideas and suggestions for how to best support the AAPI communities in Pennsylvania.
Based on our experiences of the past 4 years, we believe that these themes are very important and will continue to be so:

**Solidarity:**

- Within our diverse AAPI communities and across other communities of color that have been historically marginalized

**Visibility:**

- We know that our communities have not been well represented in all facets, so the Commission will play a big role in ensuring that the issues of our communities are being brought forward.
- We also need to ensure that our communities are represented in elected offices.
- We also want to ensure that our communities rally around other communities that are being targeted for discrimination and hate, to speak up as one voice.

**Accountability:**

- We want to ensure that State government is not just paying lip service to representing our communities. We want to ensure progress is being made on issues we care about and actual results are being delivered.
- The word “count” in accountability will be even more important with the upcoming Census, and we want to ensure that our communities are being fully accounted for in this once in a decade process.

**Recommended Areas for Next Commission**

1. Do more with Data, with a keen focus on Census
2. Continue to focus on civic engagement
3. Emphasize Health, and especially Mental Health
4. Continue to build coalitions with other communities of color
As we meet in December to close out one term and to welcome the new group of Commissioners, we will not only wish them the best, but share our experiences and pledge our continued support as they embark on their terms.
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REFERENCES & RESOURCES

- **AAPI Community Symposium Official Program:**

- **Pennsylvania’s State System of Higher Education Report - Assessing the Asian American and Pacific Islander Population In Pennsylvania:**

- **New American Economy Report - Power of the Purse: How Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders Contribute:**

- **Department of Education, Standards Aligned System: Literary Resources - Elementary 9-16-16.docx:**
  http://files5.pdesas.org/048040169236056094022025117040063184022120245184/Download.ashx?hash=2.2

- **Department of Education, Standards Aligned System: Literary Resources - Secondary 9-16-16.docx:**
  http://files5.pdesas.org/2232218510417825515703615101158236156214217126/Download.ashx?hash=2.2

- **A Community of Contrasts - Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders in the Northeast:**
  https://www.advancingjustice-aajc.org/sites/default/files/2016-09/A%20Community%20of%20Contrasts_Northeast.pdf

- **Governor Wolf’s Advisory Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs Facebook Page:**
  https://www.facebook.com/pagacapaa/

- **PA Auditor General Report regarding Berks County Detention Center:**
  https://www.paauditor.gov/Media/Default/Reports/RPT_BCRC_Berks_Center_121119_FINAL.pdf