

Call for AAPI Advisory Commission

Written Testimony of
Vishal Adma, President, and Sook Park, Executive Director
of the
Asian American Chamber of Commerce of Kansas City ("AACC")

Kansas HB 2113

Chairman Barker and Members of the House Federal and State Affairs Committee:

Thank you Chairman Barker, and Members of the House Federal and State Affairs Committee, for allowing AACC to present this testimony in support of establishing an Advisory Commission for Asian-American Pacific Islander ("AAPI") affairs. AACC is a 501(c)(6) nonprofit organization established as a Kansas corporation in 1998 with a goal of providing resources, support and economic opportunities to local AAPI owned businesses through networking, education, and advocacy.

We strongly believe that establishing an Advisory Commission on AAPI affairs will greatly enhance the opportunities for development, growth and success of AAPI businesses in the state of Kansas. The AAPI community has grown tremendously in the state of Kansas within the past 10 years. Recent census data shows that more than 96,000 persons of AAPI descent call Kansas home, which is about a 30% increase from the previous decade. Despite the growing AAPI presence and contributions to the economy of Kansas, the challenges that the AAPI business community faces have not changed – lack of advocacy resources and lack of meaningful data collection and sufficient support from government.

Over the last two years, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented immense challenges to the AAPI business community, both locally and across the nation. The AAPI business community has suffered from bias, discrimination, prejudice and violence, and AAPI businesses are struggling to survive in this and other times of adversity and crisis. Locally, we have seen the pandemic force many AAPI businesses to close or change ownership. Additional government input and resources are desperately needed to report and track relevant data and to provide adequate support to AAPI businesses in need.

Additionally, lack of data and support is further exacerbated by the fact that the AAPI business community is remarkably diverse (consisting of, just to name a few, those of Asian Indian, Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Hmong, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Malaysian, Pacific Islander, Singaporean, Taiwanese, Thai, and Vietnamese ancestries, descent and heritage). While English is certainly the predominant language of owners and employees of AAPI businesses in Kansas, over 60% of the AAPI community speaks at least one AAPI language. Chinese (including Mandarin, Cantonese) and Vietnamese are the most common AAPI languages spoken in Kansas (making up about 46% of the share), followed by Korean. When federal and state assistance became available at the beginning of the pandemic, it took AACC much longer to reach out and disseminate in appropriate form critical information regarding financial support and other resources due to the lack of information being provided in relevant languages.

We feel strongly that the formation of an AAPI Advisory Commission, by implementing a means for valuable input to the governor and the office of the governor, would help acknowledge and address the disparities and challenges facing the AAPI community and help to develop and implement state resources to meet the needs of the AAPI business community. Like many minority business communities, the COVID-19 pandemic has created challenges to personal lives in addition to issues affecting the Kansas economy in general and the education, health, and livelihood of those in the AAPI business community. In these challenging times, the growing AAPI business community needs support and requires the necessary resources to be able to thrive and continue to succeed. We should all be reminded that it is our diversity, inclusion, and acceptance that very much helps to make our Kansas communities, and our country, strong.

Accordingly, the AACC respectfully requests that the committee support Kansas HB 2113 and the functions, powers and duties set forth in Kansas HB 2113, and the formation of an important advocate for the AAPI business community, both in the current challenging times and the uncertain challenging times of the future, to ensure that AAPI businesses have the resources and support necessary to prosper and survive in, and in turn benefit and support all, Kansas communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony!



Vishal Adma M.D.
President, AACC



Sook Park
Executive Director, AACC