



**Commission on
Asian & Pacific Islander
American Affairs**

**California Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs
Public Hearing - COVID19 economic impact and education loss**

Date: Tuesday, March 30, 2021 **Time:** 6:00-8:00PM

I. Welcoming - 6:00-6:25pm

1. Call meeting to order - Chair

a) At 6:06pm

2. Roll Call - Vice Chair

a) Commissioners present:

- (1) Karthick Ramakrishnan
- (2) Helen Lee
- (3) Raymond Buenaventura
- (4) Rajan Gill
- (5) Catherine Ofa Mann
- (6) Janani Ramachandran
- (7) Kirin Macapugay
- (8) Lance Toma
- (9) Cirian Villavicencio

b) Commissioners absent:

- (1) Polly Low
- (2) Simon Pang
- (3) Christopher Punongbayan

3. Approval of minutes - Chair

a) [January 13, 2021 Minutes](#)

- (1) Motion to approve minutes by: Commissioner Villavicencio
- (2) Second by: Commissioner Mann
- (3) Discussion: None

(4) Motion to approve minutes passes:

- (a) Yes: 9
- (b) Abstain: 0
- (c) No: 0

b) [February 25, 2021 Minutes](#)

- (1) Motion to approve minutes by: Commissioner Gill
- (2) Second by: Commissioner Ramachandran
- (3) Discussion:

- (a) Commissioner Toma: To amend in "COVID-19 economic and educational impacts" to the end of the notes
- (b) Amendment accepted

(4) Motion to approve minutes passes with amendment:

- (a) Yes: 9
- (b) Abstain: 0
- (c) No: 0



Commission on Asian & Pacific Islander American Affairs

4. Welcoming remarks - Chair

- a) Acknowledge all that has been going on, the work ahead to heal our communities
- b) Purpose of today's public hearing

II. Testimonials: Economic impacts - 6:25-7:00pm

A. Lisa Fu - Executive Director with the California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative

1. Over 103 licensed manicurists in California and 81% of them are female and 69% are of Vietnamese descent. COVID had a devastating impact on the industry, by the closures with 100% unemployment during COVID, and in some counties they were closed for 60% of the last 12 months so 8 months total out of the last 12 months being completely closed and some could reopen outdoors.
2. Most nail salons left out of the COVID 19 economic recovery programs due to inaccessibility of application and language barriers.
3. June survey with UCLA labor center and surveyed over 700 on nearly 700 manicures and found that over 90% applied for unemployment and almost half needed support to apply for other government aid.
4. Survey results –
 - a) Owners were impacted financially,
 - b) 2/3 said they weren't sure how, if they would be able to afford food and other necessities. How can an employer pay for manicurists to work a full day wages, while also paying back 12 months of commercial rent that is owed.
5. Impacts - low wage older manicurists forced into retirement; 30 to 40% are leaving the industry altogether; permanent shutdowns of nail salons.
6. Inequities: nail salons were among the last three industries to reopen because they were deemed a high-risk industry, at the same time manicures are not in a higher priority tier to access vaccines.
7. CA Health Nail Salon Collaborative bridge the digital divide helping nail salon owners and employees in need by supporting with the following -
 - a) Support members to apply for unemployment services providing emergency,
 - b) Distributing PP and advocating for safety opening,
 - c) Translating essential government services, and
 - d) Supporting housing and food insecurity, domestic violence and educational inequities in their family.
8. Anti-Asian Hate - these small Asian own businesses and manicures experiencing harassment at the workplace; members are scared for their lives.
 - a) CA Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative creating de-escalation / self-defense training for manicurists and anti-aging anti-racism training to build solidarity with the Black community.
9. Ask
 - a) Commission to look at research: how the industry is truly impacted, this is the economic cornerstone for the Vietnamese; find out how so that we can continue best respond to the changes and the needs of the community and



Commission on Asian & Pacific Islander American Affairs

improve workforce development; take the time to understand what's happening so that we can take risks, and then reimagine what is possible.

B. Naindeep Singh - Executive Director with Jakara Movement

1. Anti-Asian violence discussed today has not included all Asians. Anti-Asian violence has also had a long history and impact on South Asian Central Asians and even West Asian community members.
 - a) At least 2 Sikh men working at convenience stores were murdered in the last two months.
2. Systemic violence to highlight - the safety of poultry and the plant workers from the outbreaks in Merced and Fresno.
 - a) Industries that were given veneers of immunity by the previous administration, corporate actors have consistently put profits over people as one Punjabi worker shared with me at Foster Farms and Livingston;
 - b) Many workers tested positive for COVID and some lost their lives;
 - c) Demographics - Spanish speakers; Punjabi speakers; Hmong, women;
 - d) Fresno Bee - Fresno County Public Health may have given Foster Farms a heads up about Cal OSHA's visit.
3. Ask
 - a) Commission to support call for investigation.
 - b) This is a moment to address inequities - criminalization of Black bodies, workplace violence, violence against Asian bodies, extracting their labor, without a responsibility towards their health and well-being.

C. Philip Nguyen (pronounced Filip Wen) - Community Organizing Program Manager at the Vietnamese American Roundtable

1. Imperative that we address the systemic and institutional structures and obstacles that have placed our loved ones, particularly our modeling will elders, small business owners and lower wage workers across our communities.
2. Organizational approach to community engagement -
 - a) Elder generation has rebuilt their lives after fleeing a war torn country with limited English political capital and limited resources to learn about systemic barriers;
 - b) Move younger Vietnamese Americans to action because of their first hand experiences with systemic barriers including racism; and
 - c) Acknowledging gap of information - language and culture within this community that needs to be bridged in order to fully confront and address systemic racism and injustice.
3. Misinformation about the pandemic resulted in Vietnamese Americans being reported as having one of the highest mortality rates, due to COVID19 amongst API groups, along with Filipino Americans in Santa Clara County.
4. The inaccessibility and socio economic resources compounded by this misinformation further isolates many of our most vulnerable community members whose lives and livelihoods are both at risk and at stake.



Commission on Asian & Pacific Islander American Affairs

5. Symptoms of white supremacy - disparities within the AAPI community, multi-lingual / multi-generational, supporting community and building solidarity with other movements including Black Lives Matter, fighting for disaggregated data,
6. Leading to disparate mental health impacts as well socio economic impacts through out AAPI communities
7. Ask
 - a) The commission to recognize a crucial and critical role that nonprofit community based organizations shoulder pre and during COVID to serve as a multi lingual multi generational bridge.

D. Ellen Soakai (El-le-knee Sew-ah-kah-ee) - Staff Services Manager II with the California Department of Industrial Relations

1. Working with admin to do target recruitment in hopes to hire more Pacific Islanders into civil service positions.
2. PI community disproportionately impacted by COVID. Majority are working low wage jobs, essential workers, living in multi generational homes.
3. A report that came out a month ago that a third of California and working California are making under \$15 an hour, and 20% of them have college degrees. Pacific Islanders were often left out - recruited into college athletic programs yet not prepared for the workforce.
4. Currently in the state of California, there are thousands of vacant positions, Civil Service has a high turnover with baby boomers retiring in record numbers. Opportunity for Pacific Islanders, people of color marginalized communities to take on these roles.
5. Barriers (past five years) is the State Assessment. I'm just getting past the assessment to get in front of the hiring manager to get an opportunity to interview.
6. The Constitution states that there has to be an assessment.
7. Ask
 - a) The commission to consider looking into these assessments and how to support our communities to move passed the assessment as a barrier, and
 - b) Moving these assessments into self-assessments on a bigger scale.

E. Comments and questions from Commissioners

1. Chair to Ellen - With respective Prop 209 how to include particular skills, community experiences / expertise, or language expertise to determine hiring and promotions, etc? Has there been legal analysis for what you're proposing?
 - a) Response by Ellen Soakai - Worked hand in hand with a couple of the attorneys to figure out how to develop a diverse workforce pipeline into civil service positions through an apprenticeship program. The Constitution says that there has to be an assessment - it's a matter of good test takers that are passing these exams, getting in front of those hiring managers and getting past it.
2. Commissioner Villavicencio to Lisa Fu – Are nail salons covered by PPP/PPE, are they actually receiving the help needed, how can we spotlight nail salon workers/owners?
 - a) Response by Lisa Fu: It's been discouraging to apply for PPP because it was inaccessible, especially the first round or two - leaving out the small businesses.



Commission on Asian & Pacific Islander American Affairs

- Some members have applied and some are intimidated – language barriers, having the appropriate documents, etc.
- b) In terms of PPP, we are ensuring that people are using it. CHNSC has purchased thousands distributed out freely.
 - c) CHNSC members are not using My Turn, they're more likely to access a local community clinic and mobile vaccine clinics. Isolation of Chinese Vietnamese elders in Chinatown, and there's a transportation equity issue so they're unable to access Dodger Stadium and advocating for mobile clinics – bringing the vaccines to them.
3. Commissioner Buenaventura - Has there been a push in hazard pay for certain industries? For example, the grocery store is really one of the most dangerous places to go and many localities have passed ordinances to give an additional \$5 an hour to these workers who are putting themselves at risk.. With respect to the meat packers and the people who live or work there, what is the industry like now, are they a strong industry are they making a lot of money to the point where an issue could be raised that they really should be giving some of the workers, more money, and also the same applies to the, the nail salon workers.
- a) Response from Lisa Fu – There were a lot of labor violations in the nail salon industry, including folks not getting paid minimum wage, no access to meal breaks, no overtime pay no sick leave, and during COVID, because there are so few customers, workers are not being asked to come back to work, and those that are coming back are asked if they could be paid less because maybe one customer came in a whole day. Employers are barely getting by. In addition, some members are commercial renters and still owe 12 months of back pay - \$20,000 and more. And many are closing down/shutting down.
 - b) Response from Naideep Singh: Foster Farms is one of the largest poultry producers and on the west coast with revenues in the billions. From March - June 2020 they offered hazard pay and then discontinued it. Hazard pay was on an additional \$1 per hour.

III. Testimonials: Education loss - 7:00pm-7:35pm

A. *Leila Tamale (pronounced "lay-luh tamah-lay")* - Vice President of Vakatasi Pasefika, Student in Mana Learning Community at the College of San Mateo

1. Distance learning, "distance" the first and key word in this term as one of the main problems that NHPI students are facing right now. Within a covert altered educational system.
 - a) Damaging distance from professors who don't look like PI students and curriculums and policies that aren't made with PI students in mind.
 - b) PI in general have low rates of enrollment retention and graduation.
2. The pandemic has also heightened barriers to PI community college from receiving an education -
 - a) Some are working to support family,
 - b) Struggling to pass their classes,



Commission on Asian & Pacific Islander American Affairs

- c) Dropping out for various reasons including not having conducive learning environments to concentration, lack of access to technology and adequate internet connection, and
 - d) Living in multi-generational households makes it difficult to focus when multiple family members are in one room zooming simultaneously. Sometimes there may only be one computer shared amongst the entire family.
3. Pacific Islanders have been disproportionately infected and killed by COVID-19 leaving families in mourning and financial strain. Being Pacifica means valuing family, and that oftentimes means placing the well being of the collective above the individual, especially in severe situations under COVID-19. Financial Aid, or tuition and books support is not enough.
 4. Ask:
 - a) Need additional work study programs that pay a living wage; policies that ensure that student organizations are appropriately funded to support the students; counselors that look like us for both academic and personal support, particularly regarding mental health.

B. Davina Mey (pronounced “Da-vi-na May”) - Youth Campaign Organizer with AYPAL: Building API Community Power

1. OUSD started distance learning in mid March 2020. First thing the speaker noticed was the limited workspace and having to sit in front of a screen all day.
2. Teachers are juggling both teaching and supporting student mental health.
3. Student has to balance between distance learning, working part-time job, worrying about college application, and additional responsibilities like babysitting
4. Friends have shared an increased level of depression impacting their learning and education – procrastinating, losing motivation, and not wanting to attend class.
5. COVID has taken away high school senior experience.

C. Dr. Rowena Tomaneng (pronounced Ro-Weena Tom-ahn-eng) - President of San Jose City College and San Jose Evergreen Community College District

1. The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice administered their #RealCollege survey in Fall of 2020, which included 202 higher ed institutions, 130 of them, community colleges.
 - a) Average enrollment is down 4% for Asian American students.
 - b) Nationally enrollment among students of color is down by as much as 10.7%.
2. For SJ CC, student enrollment for API students decreased by 5.4% between fall of 2019 and fall of 2020.
 - a) Overall campus declining enrollment at 16.3%;
 - b) Evergreen Valley College declined 4% for Asian Americans and 11.9% for their Pacific Islander students.
3. Distributed about 500 \$500 emergency grants to 600 API students in 2020, which constitutes 29% of the 2066 students. Asian international students were not eligible via Department of Education guidance.
 - a) Spring 202, awarded 500 emergency grants to 52 Asian international students through foundation funds and that continues.



Commission on Asian & Pacific Islander American Affairs

4. Student experiences and the impact of COVID 19 -
 - a) Taking less classes in units because working multiple jobs do the loss of income from reduce in work hours or loss in employment, and specifically for older adults, helping with their children's zoom classes.
 - b) Experiencing mental health issues, especially female students with children – experiencing high stress, overwhelmed with school and online environment, and having family responsibilities.
 - c) Students lack a quiet place to study or to do homework.
 - d) They're also avoiding difficult classes such as science with the labs, because fear of failing and impact on mental health
5. Rise of discrimination, bullying, hate crimes violent assaults against Asians, many students are traumatized anxious fearful of going out in public and fearful for their elders in the past week.
6. Ask –
 - a) Address issues of invisibility and lack of resources due to the model minority myth.
 - b) Need for increased emergency aid and other basic needs support, food, housing, transportation, and mental health support.
 - c) Urge the commission and policymakers to take the following steps to support Asian American and Pacific Islander students.
 - d) Advocate for data desegregation across the 116 California Community Colleges, so we can better understand the needs of API students, and the challenges they face.
 - e) Support AB 1040 to include more ethnic studies courses to be offered at each community college to fulfill CSU requirements.
 - f) Advocate for access to resources, particularly emergency aid, and mental health resources that support students basic needs, and their well being.

D. Dr. Timothy P. Fong - Professor of Ethnic Studies and Director of the Full Circle Project at the California State University of Sacramento

1. CSU and the California Community College System are the two largest public higher education institutions where over 80% of all API students in higher education are enrolled.
2. 66% of all students in higher education go to community college.
3. CSUs typically use the term underrepresented minority (URM) - generally defined as a US citizen who is either Black/African American, Hispanic, Native or Native American, Pacific Islanders are sometimes considered but it is applied inconsistently. Students are either URMs or they're not. Asian students are not considered underrepresented students.
 - a) CSU came out with a report acknowledging the need to support underrepresented and underserved API students.
4. 47% of all students at the CSU receive Pell Grants, which are the federal grants reserved for the lowest income students over 32% cost about a third of CSU students are first generation in the family to attend college.
5. Ask -



Commission on Asian & Pacific Islander American Affairs

- a) Invest in underserved API students to address educational opportunity gaps, as well as economic opportunity camps.

E. Comments and questions from Commissioners (15 minutes)

1. Chair to Dr. Tomaneng – There was some resistance on data disaggregation in education based on misconceptions. When disaggregated health data was pushed, there was the understanding that higher education systems would voluntarily disaggregate data as well. Recently, The Campaign for College Opportunity was trying to do a report on education equity for API communities and having a very difficult time. What is going on in the community college system [with disaggregating API data]?
 - a) Response by Dr. Tomaneng - It is “voluntarily” - was recommended and it was encouraged to do. Challenging for a big system like California Community Colleges where there are different districts with local control unless there is legislation and also a mandate coming from our state chancellor's office.
 - (1) Lack of funding.
 - (2) We need to increase the capacity for statewide leaders from the faculty classified professionals administration to really step up and do that equity walk.
 - b) Response from Dr. Fong – The data on Asian Americans shared was just aggregated data and even then there are gaps. If we are able to look at disaggregated data [Dr. Fong can do that at Sac State] the data would show far worse disparities. The Office of Institutional Research is working on developing a dashboard.
 - c) Response from Chair - There’s supposed to be better longitudinal data systems, between education and workforce. There may be an opportunity to collect better data, race, detailed ethnicity data.
 - d) Point of clarification from Executive Director, Nkauj Iab Yang – Meeting with California for All – Longitudinal Data system staff mentioned that they are not disaggregating API data because public education institutions are not collecting consistent disaggregated API demographics (ethnic categories) and hope that there will be legislation to do just that for all public education institutions.
2. Commissioner Villavicencio to Dr. Tomaneng and Dr. Fong – Could you talk a little bit about what it means to be a Minority Serving Institution (MSI) and the AANAPISI grant and what can the commission do to help provide funding to support underserved Asian American Pacific Islander students?
 - a) Response by Dr. Fong – AANAPISI stands for Asian American, Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions and is a federal designation. There is a great underfunding.
 - (1) There are 71 AANAPISI designated schools in California, which is the largest portion in the nation. In order to be AANAPISI, institutions must have a certain percentage of Asian students Asian Pacific Islander students, but the other part of it is over 50% low income.
 - (2) There are programs like Umoja and Puente that are in the community colleges and help students transfer to a four-year institution. They are



Commission on Asian & Pacific Islander American Affairs

also funded by the state of California. There isn't anything for AAPI students.

- b) Response from Dr. Tomaneng – De Anza college was one of the inaugural community colleges that received that first round of funding from the Federal Department of Education. Dr. Fong is active in researching the impact of these projects that have been developed and being sustained. These programs, including Full Circle Program also provide a culturally responsive curriculum so our students see their lived experiences being recognized in the classroom, and they provide holistic support.
 - (1) AAPIs are the lowest funded minority group in education.
3. Commission Ramachandran to Laila and Davina – What are the mental health needs that you and your fellow peers, community leaders and organizers are seeking? Is it more therapist to reflect API identities? Is it more mental health resources provided by your school and university? Are they peer support groups?
 - a) Response from Leila: Mental health is still a “taboo” topic in the PI community which makes it difficult to be transparent about needs.
 - (1) Need counselors that are PI or part of the API community or just people of color that will make it easiest for students to open up.
 - (2) Student groups.
 - b) Response from Davina: Need for funded peer groups – addressing mental health, issues impacting teens.

IV. Public Comments

A. *No public comments were made.*

V. Comments from the Chair and Commissioners

A. Chair Ramakrishnan:

1. Commission has launched a survey for Asian American and Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander serving organizations, to assess the state of our community communities and be an effective advocate for nonprofits especially small to medium sized nonprofits that do not have any champion in Sacramento. Please fill out, circulate, etc.
2. Give in May efforts for nonprofits to build grassroots philanthropy muscle.
3. Lastly, historic to have Filipino American as our new Attorney General of California, a champion of immigrant rights, worker rights, and the API community broadly.

B. Commissioner Toma -

1. Acknowledge all that is going on – COVID, violence and hate, experiencing education and economic loss. Hope to find things and moments to celebrate. How do we take this moment to really think about how we collectively heal together. Perhaps a course resources about ways to approach our collective mental health.

C. Commissioner Macapugay -

1. Also a community college professor and a trustee for another community college. Want to address how difficult it is that students have dropped out of school, decrease in enrollments are deeply affecting our community colleges. 162 professors, both full time and adjunct professors, at San Francisco City College have been pink slipped, including the Chair of Filipinx Studies, meaning, we are potentially going to be losing key historical



Commission on Asian & Pacific Islander American Affairs

educational programs so please also keep that in mind. Advocate against educational cuts.

VI. Adjournment

- A. Adjournment- 7:50pm