

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS

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AND JANICE HAHN

Proclaiming May 2023 as “Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month”

Since 1992¹, the United States has observed “Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month” in the month of May to celebrate and recognize the contributions, impact, and influence that Asian and Pacific Islander Americans (AAPI) have made.

AAPIs in America have made an indelible mark on our nation’s history and make up one of the “fast growing racial groups in the U.S. constituting about one-third of the one million legal immigrants who enter the U.S. annually.”² AAPIs represent over “30 countries and ethnic groups that speak over 100 different languages.”³ In fact, about 16.6 million AAPIs⁴ live in the country, accounting for almost 6% of the total U.S.

¹ <https://asianpacificheritage.gov/about/>

² [https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/administration/eop/aapi/data/critical-issues#:~:text=Approximately%2016.6%20million%20AAPIs%20reside,5.4%25%20of%20U.S.%20population\).](https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/administration/eop/aapi/data/critical-issues#:~:text=Approximately%2016.6%20million%20AAPIs%20reside,5.4%25%20of%20U.S.%20population).)

³ Id.

⁴ Id.

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population.⁵ By 2050, it is projected that almost 10% of the U.S. population will be made up of AAPIs⁶.

Los Angeles County (County) has by far, compared to any other county in the country, the largest AAPI population. Almost 1.5 million AAPIs call LA County home. The County takes pride in having many AAPI communities represented through ethnic enclaves, such as Chinatown, Little Tokyo, Historic Filipinotown, Thai Town and Koreatown; cities in the San Gabriel Valley and South Bay; and unincorporated areas including Rowland Heights and Hacienda Heights.

The path for AAPIs has had its ups and downs -- from Chinese nationals arriving on American soil as far back as the middle of the 19th Century facing discrimination and racism; the incarceration of people with Japanese descent, including Japanese Americans following World War II; and recently when AAPIs were seen as a scapegoat for the pandemic and targeted with violence – a 76% increase in anti-Asian hate crimes in the County in 2000⁷.

Since March 2020, the Stop AAPI Hate coalition received nearly 11,500 reports of hate incidents against AAPIs from across the country with half taking place in public venues, including streets, parks, and on transit, in addition to other communities like Black and Latina women, women of color, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ+. Senator Dave Min has put forward Senate Bill (SB) 434⁸, sponsored by the Stop AAPI Hate coalition, to promote safe ridership by requiring the top 10 transit operators in the

⁵ Id.

⁶ Id.

⁷ <https://www.dailynews.com/2022/05/03/la-proclaims-tuesday-asian-american-pacific-islander-la-day/>

⁸ https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240SB434

State to collect qualitative and quantitative ridership data about street harassment while riders are waiting at their transit stops and publish it on their websites.⁹ It would also conduct outreach activities with riders who are underrepresented yet impacted by street harassment.¹⁰

Unfortunately, AAPI communities in Los Angeles County and nationwide face significant disparities in mental health. AAPI residents have historically accessed mental health resources at lower rates, often attributed to language barriers, cultural attitudes, and stigma. Studies show AAPI residents are less likely to utilize mental health services compared to other racial and ethnic groups. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), given immigration is a primary driver of AAPI population growth in the United States, many AAPI do not speak English as their primary language, and 60% of AAPI residents aged 65 years and older have limited English proficiency. These barriers and limited availability of culturally appropriate providers can prevent people from getting the care they need. Additionally, AAPI residents are more likely to report foregoing treatment due to stigma and fear of shame. In 2021, among adults with any mental illness in the past year, only 25% of AAPI adults reported receiving mental health services, compared to 52% of White adults nationwide. The low utilization rates are especially concerning in light of the COVID-19 pandemic contributing to worsening mental health across the population, including AAPI people. In addition, AAPI residents experienced increased discrimination and hate crimes, which research showed had a negative impact on the community's mental health. May is also Mental Health

⁹ https://noplaceforhateca.org/SB_434_Ridership_Safety_Fact_Sheet_2023_03_21.pdf

¹⁰ Id.

Awareness Month, and a concerted effort to provide outreach and resources to AAPI residents to break down barriers to mental health would play a significant role in helping address health disparities.

In response to the tragic mass shooting at Monterey Park, the Department of Mental Health (DMH) has launched a “Tea Time” initiative at the Langley Senior Center. Designed to break down barriers and address stigma among AAPI older adults with accessing mental health resources, this culturally accessible initiative provides culturally tailored outreach to this community and has made significant inroads in breaking down barriers for the community. This initiative has already resulted in an increase of older AAPI adults signing up for needed mental health support and resources.

This type of programming is essential for breaking down systemic issues that have impacted AAPI communities. Despite discrimination and struggles, AAPIs have achieved much in all industries, especially in leadership – nationally, with the election of the first Vice-President with an Asian-American ethnic background and the nomination of the first AAPI Secretary of Labor; and locally in the County with the appointment of the first AAPI Director of Mental Health.

The County is also proud to have a large contingent of AAPI employees who contribute and service the great needs of this County, many of whom deliver information and resources in a culturally competent and linguistically inclusive manner for our large immigrant communities.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Proclaim the month of May 2023 as “Asian-American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month”.

2. Direct CEO-Countywide Communications to work with all County Departments to highlight and promote their respective AAPI Heritage Month activities, events, and programs on the County websites and social media platforms.
3. Recognize the Chinese Employee Association of Los Angeles County, Korean American Employee Association of Los Angeles County, Los Angeles County Asian American Employee Association, Los Angeles County Cambodian Employee Association, Los Angeles County Filipino American Employee Association, and the Vietnamese Employee Association of Los Angeles County for their dedication and service to the 10 million residents of LA County.
4. Waive parking fees in the amount of \$2,500 for approximately 250 vehicles at Lot 14, excluding the cost of liability insurance, on May 19, 2023, for community members attending the First District's AAPI Heritage Month Reception.
5. Direct the Chief Executive Office's Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations branch to support Senate Bill 434 (Min) – Transit Operators: Street Harassment Survey.

WE, FURTHER, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors instruct the Department of Mental Health, in collaboration with relevant departments and community partners, to:

1. Conduct a public outreach campaign, utilizing traditional, hyperlocal, ethnic, and social media, to raise awareness of Los Angeles County Mental Health Awareness Month, and uplift resources available to County residents.

2. Work with the Chief Executive Office, community-based organizations, and federally-qualified health clinics, to explore expansion of the successful “Tea Time” initiative to other AAPI-communities, and identify similar interventions that can be explored for other communities of color, including Latino/a, Black/African American, Native/Indigenous, and LGBTQ+ residents.

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