

**Remarks from the Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs for the
District of Columbia
Committee on Housing & Community Development
February 10, 2016**

Good morning. My name is Ada Loo and I am the current Chair of the Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs. Thank you Councilmember Bonds for allowing me the opportunity to provide remarks on behalf of the Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs and before the hearing on Performance Oversight. I also want to recognize my fellow commissioners who are with me today – Commissioner Laura Shin and Commissioner Sapna Pandya. I also have brought with me a letter of support for the Mayor’s Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs from the Dana Tai Soon Burgess Dance Company which are attached to my written remarks.

The establishment of the District of Columbia’s Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs (the “Commission”) is to advise the Mayor, the Council, the Director of the Mayor’s Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs, and the public on the views and needs of the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities in the District of Columbia. Currently, the Commission consist of 15 members who have been appointed by the Mayor and reflect the demographic, geographic, and ethnic diversity of the AAPI community here in the District of Columbia.

The Commission has been working with the Mayor’s Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs (“MOAPIA”) to support its efforts to achieve success for the Asian American and Pacific Islander (“AAPI”) community through advocacy, community engagement, intergovernmental affairs, and policy and research. Throughout the year, the Commission supports MOAPIA’s programs so that the 32,607¹ District AAPIs and their needs remain visible to the District agencies to build the AAPI community’s capacity by providing culturally and linguistically competent services. One of the successful ways that we have been able to build capacity for the community is through MOAPIA’s grant funding. Without MOAPIA’s grant-making support, our population’s needs may not be adequately addressed, which is why the Commission appreciates

¹ This number is based on the 2014 Census.

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that MOAPIA has chosen to support eight community-based organizations for Fiscal Year 2016, which totaled \$213,500 in community grants.

The Commission commends MOAPIA for adding two new Community Based Organizations (“CBOs”) in support of the Commission’s concerns around affordable housing. These two new CBOs are the Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center, who received \$25,000, and Housing Counseling Services, who received \$12,500. We also want to commend Director Do and his staff, as they continue to effectively support the needs of the District’s AAPI communities through these community grants, as well as through direct community outreach assistance and quality programming for our AAPI Seniors, as well as our Youths.

However, we want to note that the Commission is concerned with the delays in the community grant process. This year, programming available to AAPIs was severely impacted as grant agreements still are not in place with the fiscal year having already begun. The Commission asks for greater transparency and accountability through the grant process and timely communication of any changes in the process itself, whether it may be adding new performance measures or any changes in community grant funding priorities. Non-responsiveness by the Office of Community Affairs, which was not an issue in previous administrations, has caused miscommunications to our community based organizations and a lack of trust for the Mayor’s push for more transparency. Therefore, now that a process is in place, we hope that future funding will not be stalled. Moreover, should there be any foreseeable problems, we hope that the Office of Community Affairs will be held accountable for its actions and be transparent to the community to allay any concerns.

As to what to expect from the Commission, are two priority initiatives that the Commission has committed to work on which came out of the AAPI Action Forum that was held on Sept. 12th of last year. The two priority initiatives cover Cultural Diversity Training and Affordable Housing. The first initiative on cultural diversity training will be

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led by Commissioner Martha Watanabe. The plan is currently in its initial stages. The second initiative on affordable housing will be led by Commissioner Thu Nguyen. This initiative was the result of the Museum Square Apartments issue that is currently in litigation. The Commission met with the residents of Museum Square Apartments at the end of last year, along with their lawyer from the APALRC and a representative from Housing Counseling Services. The Commission unanimously approved a resolution regarding Museum Square Apartments, which I will be submitting along with my written remarks. The Commission will provide progress reports throughout the year on both of these initiatives.

And lastly, we previously shared with the Committee about the unexpected loss of Commissioner Ajay K. Ojha, who had passed away while volunteering overseas on a community service project back in 2014. We are happy to announce that at the Mayor's Annual Heritage Month event last year, we honored ANC Commissioner John Tinpe with the Commission's first Volunteer Service Award named after the late Commissioner Ojha.

Again, thank you for providing me the opportunity to address the Committee and to submit these remarks on behalf of the DC Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs.

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Members of the DC Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs

Commissioner Ada L. Loo, Chair
Commissioner Dana Tai Soon Burgess,
Vice Chair
Commissioner Surjeet Ahluwalia
Commissioner Koustubh "K.J." Bagchi
Commissioner Ben Bahk
Commissioner Gregory Cendana
Commissioner Erick Hosaka

Commissioner Easten Law
Commissioner Nicholas Lephram
Commissioner Thu Nguyen
Commissioner Sapna Pandya
Commissioner Laura Shin
Commissioner Benjamin Takai
Commissioner Martha Watanabe
Commissioner Jed Wulfekotte

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Attachments:

- (1) CAPIA Resolution on Affordable Housing
- (2) MOAPIA Letter of Support from DTSBDC