



# VA AAPI CAUCUS

Virginia Asian American & Pacific Islander Caucus

- Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) are the fastest growing ethnic minority group in the Commonwealth of Virginia, having increased by 112% over the last two decades.
- Over 750,000 members of the AAPI communities represent almost 7% of Virginia's population.
- As we rebuild from the pandemic, we have an historic opportunity to address long-standing systemic barriers to public health and economic opportunities affecting AAPI Virginians, while countering the rise in hate and violence our communities have faced.
- Virginia Asian American and Pacific Islander Caucus (VAAPIC) is a legislative organization recognized in 2021 by the General Assembly to serve as a collaborative voice for Virginia's AAPI communities by identifying public issues of interest, developing formal positions, facilitating discussions, and advocating for positive policy outcomes.
- Earlier this year, VAAPIC held listening sessions with diverse AAPI grassroots, civic, business, youth, and academic leaders, participated in roundtables hosted by Governor Ralph Northam, and met individually with numerous community leaders.
- Our legislative agenda for 2022 includes key priorities raised by the communities during these conversations, and members of VAAPIC are planning to introduce legislation in the General Assembly session to address these priorities.
- We ask the AAPI communities in Virginia to partner with us to educate the public on these issues and to enact solutions into law so that our communities' needs can be included in our state's policies.

## **VAAPIC 2022 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA**

### **Expand Language Access**

Language access is foundational to ensuring the health and economic well-being of the AAPI communities. Unfortunately, Virginia state agencies have a patchwork of language access policies, resulting in inequitable access to critical state services for vulnerable Virginians who are limited English proficient. We will work to achieve language access equity in government.

### **Address the Rise in Hate and Violence**

Virginia ranks 12th in the nation for AAPI hate incidents occurring between March 2020 through September 2021. We will seek better understanding of and measures to address the causes of violence towards AAPI Virginians; focus on ensuring our K-12 educators are equipped to respond to anti-AAPI bullying in a culturally competent manner; and ensure that outward expressions of faith are covered in anti-discrimination protections.

### **Grow Entrepreneurs and Support Small Businesses**

One in five Virginia business owners is an immigrant, and AAPIs make up 7% of all Virginia entrepreneurs. We will expand opportunities for AAPI and immigrant-owned businesses to fully participate in state procurement opportunities and better protections against certain financial practices.

### **Support Refugees**

The refugee experience has particular resonance for many AAPI Virginians. We support “Afghan Refugee Day of Action” to promote allies working to resettle Afghans in Virginia, and will work to allow temporary teaching licensure of internationally accredited teachers, thus enabling qualified immigrants and refugees to help fill vacancies in our schools.

### **Invest in Our Communities**

Virginia is experiencing an historic budget surplus. We will push for increased funding of public K-12 and college, more financial aid for low-income students, and better pay for teachers. We will seek investments in health care, including mental health, and other services to support AAPIs.