



VA AAPI CAUCUS

Virginia Asian American & Pacific Islander Caucus

PRESS ADVISORY

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Virginia Asian American and Pacific Islander Caucus Reports Progress as the State Legislature Crosses Midpoint of Session

Richmond, VA - At the beginning of the 2022 General Assembly session, the Virginia Asian American and Pacific Islander Caucus (VAAPIC) released its legislative policy agenda that included a dozen bills and several budget items.

The items on this list were drafted to advance the needs and interests of the Commonwealth's fastest growing ethnic minority group, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI), which make up seven percent of the state's total population.

This week marked the halfway point in the legislative session, which meant that every bill introduced in the House of Delegates or in the State Senate had to "crossover" to the other chamber by this deadline.

VAAPIC is pleased to report that six bills on its agenda successfully passed the chamber of origin and will now be considered in the other body.

PROGRESS ON 2022 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Expanding Language Access

Senator Ghazala Hashmi introduced Senate Bill 156 to increase state funding for instruction of English language learners, instructing the Department of Education to provide guidance to school divisions on collecting and reporting English proficiency data.

The **bill passed the Senate** on a bipartisan vote of 22-18 and is now pending in the House.

Senator Ghazala Hashmi introduced Senate Bill 270 and Delegate Kathy Tran introduced House Bill 1049 to establish an Interagency Language Access Working Group and require state agencies to have language access coordinators and plans to maximize state policies, resources, technical assistance, and procurement practices to further language access equity in Virginia and its state government agencies.

The Senate **bill passed the Senate** on a party line vote of 21-19, but unfortunately, the House bill was tabled in Appropriations Committee after being reported favorably out of the Health Welfare and Institutions Committee.

Delegate Kathy Tran introduced House Bill 987 which expands health care by directing the Board of Medical Assistance Services to require that Medicaid program information be made available for free to Virginians with limited English proficiency through the provision of language access services, including oral interpretation and written translations.

The **bill passed the House** on a unanimous vote and is now pending in the Senate.

Delegate Kathy Tran introduced House Bill 1221 to ensure Virginia's hospitals translate and provide information about charity care to patients who have limited English proficiency. Unfortunately, the bill was tabled in the Health Welfare and Institutions Committee.

Addressing Hate and Violence against AAPIs

Delegate Suhas Subramanyam introduced House Joint Resolution 88 to require the Virginia State Crime Commission to study increases in hate crimes and bias-motivated acts directed at AAPIs. Unfortunately, this bill was never scheduled for any meeting of the Rules Committee, which means that the important issues underlying the bill were not even considered by any member of the legislature this year.

Delegate Kelly Convirs-Fowler introduced House Bill 371 to require school employees to take cultural competency training relating to bullying of AAPI students. Unfortunately, the bill was tabled in the Education Subcommittee on a party line vote of 5-3.

Delegate Irene Shin introduced House Bill 1063 to clarify that religious discrimination being prohibited includes using outward expression of religious faith as a factor.

The **bill passed the House** on a unanimous vote and is now pending in the Senate.

Promoting Entrepreneurs and Small Businesses

Senator Ghazala Hashmi introduced Senate Bill 261 to direct the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Education Advisory Board to revise the STEM+C (Computing) workforce profile to better align K-12 and higher education priorities. The bill was considered by the Finance & Appropriations Committee and continued to the next legislative session.

Delegate Suhas Subramanyam introduced House Bill 963 to require the Department of Small Business and Supplier Diversity to develop targeted outreach and programming to build local small business capacity and assist businesses in obtaining appropriate certifications. The bill passed the General Laws Committee on a bipartisan 15-7 vote but failed to pass the full House on a near party line vote of 47-53.

Delegate Suhas Subramanyam introduced House Bill 966 to require government agencies to create set-aside programs for small and micro-businesses. Unfortunately, the bill was tabled in the General Laws Subcommittee on a party line vote of 5-3.

Delegate Kathy Tran introduced House Bill 1027 to require companies offering merchant cash advances to register with the State Corporation Commission, offering new protections for small businesses against these potentially predatory lending practices.

The **bill passed the House** on a unanimous vote and is now pending in the Senate.

Supporting Immigrants and Refugees

Delegate Kathy Tran introduced House Bill 979 to require the Board of Education to issue provisional teaching licenses to foreign education professionals who hold valid certifications issued by entities outside of the U.S. to address teacher shortages.

The **bill passed the House** on a bipartisan vote of 95-3 and is now pending in the Senate.

Investing in AAPI Communities

As the Senate and House Appropriations Committees draft the state's biennial budget with historic revenues coming in, VAAPIC members have introduced and support numerous budget amendments to address language assistance, help immigrant and refugee nurses take steps towards licensure in Virginia, increase funding of public K-12 and college education, provide more financial aid for low-income students, improve pay for teachers, and make significant investments in health care, including mental health, and other critical public services to support AAPIs.

These items for funding priorities will be considered when both chambers take up the state's biennial budget in the coming weeks.

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Virginia Asian American and Pacific Islander Caucus (VAAPIC) is a legislative organization recognized by the General Assembly to serve as a collaborative voice for Virginia's Asian American and Pacific Islander communities by identifying public issues of interest and to develop formal positions, facilitate discussions, and advocate for positive policy outcomes. @VAAPICaucus