



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## Asian American and Pacific Islanders Commission

**Description:** These notes highlight the most important takeaways from the Massachusetts AAPI Commission's Western Mass Listening Session, which was held Saturday, March 25, 2023 in Springfield, MA. The notes are broken into four sections: Main Takeaways, Updates from Organizations, and Next Steps.

**Contact:** If you have any questions about these notes, the AAPI Commission, or want to work with us, please contact Hannah Ku, our Regional Coordinator, at [regional.coordinator@aapicommission.org](mailto:regional.coordinator@aapicommission.org)

### Main Takeaways

- Lack of information to Western Massachusetts communities
  - Wanting to further expand AAPI-related courses in Western Massachusetts area
    - Wanting to expand to different schools
  - Wanting educational programs to be more inclusive
    - Pushing for the CARE bill
  - Increase AAPI representation in POC groups
  - Wanting representation from all AAPI ethnicities - Wanting to reflect diversity and inclusivity
- Educational programs
  - Business Owners
    - More information on how to initiate/network more efficiently
    - Grant information (circulate more publicly through the listserv)
  - Legal Protections
    - Advocacy for refugees
  - Information for the elderly
- Wanting other various informative resources
  - Voting guides
  - Resources for domestic violence survivors
  - Resources for AAPI mental health
  - Information about housing issues

### Updates from Organizations

- WNE APALSA (Monique Hoppe & Thao Gonzalez-Pho)
  - Created a [list](#) of resources for the AAPI community
  - Organization was able to fight against the detention of a Cambodian refugee



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- Context: In 2002, US and Cambodian governments signed an agreement deporting Cambodians back to Cambodia for various offenses (as minor as driving without a driver's license)
  - In 2008, the United States and Vietnamese governments signed an agreement, but people who came after 1995 can be deported
  - No agreement with Laos signed
  - Currently working with a representative to develop a pathway to allow individuals to obtain full medical licenses without having to go through years of internship
  - Thao is also working with [Cornell University](#) to fight against ICE deportations against those without I-9 documents (authorization to work)
- AAPI Club (Sea Kay Leung & Talvin Dhingra)
  - Participated in a study to impact legislation in Mississippi and Alabama
- ACUA (American Chinese United Association)
  - Reported successful celebrations of the Lunar New Year event at the Springfield Basketball Hall of Fame, with over 500 attendees
- Chinese Association of Western Massachusetts
  - Participated in the celebration of International Women's Day organized by AfriKque
  - Successful Lunar New Year celebration held at Smith Vocational School, with over 400 participants and vendors
  - Participated in community outreach at Orchard Valley in Wilbraham
  - Planning to participate in West Springfield's celebration of 250 years in 2024
- Springfield Vietnamese Cultural Association (SVCA)
  - Organization is working closely in Springfield Massachusetts
  - Hosted a successful Vietnamese New Year event that hosted approximately 500 people
  - Additionally hosted a Moon Festival event
  - Reports of domestic abuse within the community and are looking for ways to redress
- Bayanihan (Olive Melaya)
  - Organized three events in October, December and a Valentine's party
  - Looking forward to attending Independence Day June 4th in NYC
  - Planning future events, e.g. picnic, and flag raising event in Springfield
  - Issue of members of the community: Many lost jobs due to COVID-19
- Bhutanese Community (Hari Khanal)
  - Working to find nonprofits to help disperse remaining funds for finishing an oral history project



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### Next Steps:

- Institute quarterly meetings
  - Regular meetings are a way for Western Mass communities to connect with other organizations and to share resources with each other
  - Meetings also build upon collective strength
    - Building momentum to hopefully have a physical space to meet
- Plan for a big multicultural event - September 29th 2023