



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Asian American Commission

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Meeting Minutes

May 27, 2021, 6:00pm – 7:30pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89689939147>

*Please note this meeting will be recorded

Meeting was held via teleconference in compliance with the Governor's Executive Order on the Open Meeting Law and COVID-19.

Present Commissioners are marked with a *. Absent Commissioners are highlighted.

Staff present: Yasmin, Kamalani, Jay
Members of the public: Gloribel Rivas, Steven Gingras, Dulce Gonzalez
Meeting is recorded.

Attachments:

- Legislative Text - Language Access Bill
- Legislative Text - Work and Family Mobility Act
- Factsheet - Language Access Bill
- Factsheet - Work and Family Mobility Act

1. Call to order (10 mins)

Sam calls the meeting to order at 6:04pm.

2. Introduction of H.3199 / S.2040 - An Act relative to language access and inclusion

- Deliberation (20 mins)

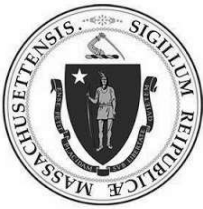
Danielle stated that people are supportive. Phased approach beginning with 9 state agencies and ultimately rolling out to other agencies.

Megha states that we have discussed these two bills previously as a Gov Relations Subcommittee.

Nate states that this bill is long overdue. He has a question about whether community engagement and outreach are part of this legislation.

Gloribel responds that this bill would create a language access advisory board with representatives from multilingual speakers, the deaf and hard of hearing community, and others. The goal of this advisory board would be to advance greater community engagement and ensure that state agencies are more responsible to limited English-speaking communities.

Ekta expresses strong support for this bill, given she works at a Massachusetts state agency and language access is incredibly important considering the pandemic. She



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notes that translated documents aren't enough and oftentimes, people are directing to online resources that are in English alone.

Nate asked if the information would trickle down to more state agencies and municipalities.

Gloribel responds that the intention is to start with the 9 core state agencies and consider expanding to other state bodies and municipalities down the road.

Dulce Gonzalez joined the meeting as a member of the public.

Sam expresses support for the bill, and notes that he would like to see federal aid directly to this issue as well to ensure that there is funding to support these efforts.

Gloribel Rivas expresses appreciation to the AAC for considering this bill. She notes that lack of language access reinforces discrimination and creates inequities across communities.

She notes that Rep. Madaro represents East Boston, which has a high number of multilingual speakers and immigrant residents, and many residents were unable to access various services during the pandemic. She notes the importance of this legislation and offers to continue the dialogue on this bill.

Steven Gingras thanks the Commission for our interest in the bill. He recognizes that the issue of language access affects so many residents across the Commonwealth, including the AAPI community. Gingras said he will let Rep. Madaro and the co-filers know, and they are honored to have AAC's vote of support.

Nate asks for clarification about interpretation services and how it would apply to virtual meetings. Gloribel responds that this bill covers website translation, and she will follow up to investigate the issue of virtual meetings.

Takes into consideration websites but not sure about machine translation as it can produce inequity.

Meena motions for the AAC to endorse H.3199 / S.2040, Megha seconds.

Vote on H.3199 / S.2040

Yes: Megha, Meena, Philijay, Ekta, Nate, Vira, Haniya, Danielle, Sam

No: none

Abstain: none

Motion passes.

3. Introduction of H.3456 / S.2289 - An Act relative to work and family mobility during and subsequent to the COVID-19 emergency



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Dulce Gonzalez thanks the Commission for considering this bill. Dulce gives an overview of the bill, mentioning that the bill was previously filed last session with 89 co-sponsors and re-introduced this legislative session. Last session, it was approved favorably out of the Transportation Committee. She notes that there is growing interest and momentum around the bill.

She notes that the bill would provide access to driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants. 20 other states have already passed similar legislation. The bill would also enable undocumented immigrants to access a state ID, and this has been a barrier for some residents in accessing services and food pantries during the pandemic. She notes the equity issue with higher concentrations of immigrant residents being forced to use public transit during the height of the pandemic.

Danielle said that AAC decided to endorse it in the last session. The folks in the AAPI community are fast growing and it is important that they have access to driver's licenses.

Sam expresses support for the bill and acknowledges that issues affecting undocumented immigrants are particularly important to the AAPI community. He notes that 1 in 7 residents of Korean descent in this country are undocumented. Unique opportunity to be leaders and stand in solidarity with other minority communities. Hopefully signed into law by Governor Baker.

Meena asked if any concerns or questions arose in the subcommittee. Megha said that as AAC had previously endorsed this bill there were only positive perceptions.

Megha notes that the issue of identification has come to the forefront recently because some individuals have been asked for IDs when getting vaccinated. As the subcommittee had no questions then we can highlight the recommendations during the full commission.

Meena suggests discussing and considering legislation at our regular monthly meetings. She thanks advocates and others for their leadership on this issue.

Danielle thanks Meena for her input and mentions that it is hard to anticipate the time it will take to discuss each legislation, whether there will be many people from the public.

Dulce Gonzalez mentions that some individuals had concerns about privacy related to the undocumented community and this version of the bill includes some protections for privacy.

Ekta expresses support for the bill, and she notes that this legislation increases the ability for residents to access basic needs, especially for people outside of Greater Boston who cannot rely on public transportation.



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Meena motions for the AAC to endorse H.3456 / S.2289. Haniya seconds.

Yes: Megha, Meen, Philijay, Ekta, Nate, Vira, Haniya, Danielle, Sam

No: none

Abstain: none

Motion passes.

4. Next Commission meeting: June 1, 2021

5. Other Community updates & Meeting adjourned

Meena mentions that there was an Indian Visa Camp earlier this month, and the AAC was a partner. Meena notes that she had an opportunity to speak as a representative of the AAC. She mentions that 1,000 individuals attended following CDC guidelines.

Wonderful event that was supported by state senators. She notes that this has been a challenging time for the Indian community, and it was important to connect with each other.

Sam notes that there was violence yesterday in San Jose, California, and the victims included members of the South Asian community. Sam. thanked staff from the senator, AAC staff and Commissioners.

Nate motions to adjourn the meeting. Ekta seconds.

Yes: Megha, Meena, Philjay, Ekta, Nate, Vira, Haniya, Danielle, Sam

No: none

Abstain: none

Motion passes.

Meeting adjourned at 6:41 pm