



SEARAC

May 20, 2019

The Honorable Susan A. Davis
Chair
Subcommittee on Higher Education and
Workforce Investment
2176 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lloyd Smucker
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Higher Education and
Workforce Investment
2101 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Statement for the Hearing Record for the Subcommittee Hearing “Engines of Economic Mobility: The Critical Role of Community Colleges, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and Minority-Serving Institutions in Preparing Students for Success”

Chairwoman Davis and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for today’s hearing. My name is Kayhlia Yang. I am a Hmong-Lao American. I am from Sacramento, California. I recently moved to Irvine, California in August 2018 and since then have been attending Irvine Valley College (IVC). I am currently a part of our AANAPISI funded program on campus. I started off as a mentee, a part of the mentee-mentor program the AANAPISI program has created. But currently I am now a tutor for the AANAPISI program. Starting off as a mentee for the AANAPISI program allowed myself a smooth transition moving from college to college. Being at the AANAPISI funded space has allowed me to feel a sense of belonging and has made me feel like I have a space on campus I can go to when I need a place to eat, study, take a break, or just hangout. Specifically having the mentee-mentor program allowed me from the start of my time at Irvine Valley College to get to know people and see how similar our stories are. This mentee-mentor program also allowed me guidance in how to maneuver my way throughout IVC and have a successful time here.

I think that AANAPISIs are important because it allows for Asian American students, like myself, to come together and feel a sense of belonging. This space has allowed me to build relationships I know will last a lifetime. ANNAPISIs allow for there to be a community-based foundation for Asian American students who need that. The CAANAPI Learning Center is the name of the AANAPISI funded program at Irvine Valley College. It stands for Center for Asian Americans and Native American Pacific Islanders. The CAANAPI has allowed me more opportunities to be involved and share my story. In April 2019, the CAANAPI took nine students and six faculty members to

Oakland, California to attend APAHE (Asian Pacific Americans in Higher Education). This experience allowed me more opportunities to hear Asian Americans speak about pursuing higher education, fulfilling their dreams jobs, and really displaying the higher positions they hold.

It was truly inspiring to be able to hear these stories and witness what higher education has done for others. Hearing these stories allowed me to recognize that anything is possible, especially for an underrepresented community like us. At APAHE, IVC was able to have five students, myself being one, present a reader's theatre as a workshop and display to those our own personal narratives of being an Asian American. The same reader's theatre was then presented amongst some individuals on campus, it informs the audience about our stories as Asian Americans, including the topics of stereotypes, sacrifice, success, racism, neglect, and most importantly identity. This reader's theatre has been a great way for CAANAPI to share their stories and to inform those non-Asians, that we are not the same and we all have different backgrounds and stories that make us different.

Growing up in Sacramento, I grew up in a predominantly White and African American community. Up until high school, I was one out of two Asian Americans within my grade. I always felt very different amongst my peers as if I did not belong. In high school, I neglected my Asian American identity and tried to fit in amongst my peers and tried to play this role of someone who I was not. Starting college, I began to recognize my differences a lot more and decided that I should embrace them rather than neglect them. Sierra College (the first community college I attended) had no programs or clubs that served a purpose for Asian American students, they only had PUESO for the Latinx community. My time at Sierra College was short, but within that year I was not really involved in anything on-campus besides my academics because that sense of belonging was still not present for me. It was not until my time at Irvine Valley College, I was finally in a space where I saw others that looked like me, met others who understood me, and really got to embrace my Asian-American identity.

I recently applied to seven UC's this past November: Davis, San Diego, Santa Cruz, Santa Barbara, Irvine, Los Angeles, and Berkeley. I was lucky enough to be accepted into all seven. Initially, when applying I did not think I was going to have that many options to choose from or be accepted into any. My dream has been to attend a University of California. In my personal insight questions, I talked a lot about my experiences that I felt I was made to be different being an Asian American and also how hearing the stories of struggle and sacrifice amongst my family members made me realize there needed to be a change. These stories have inspired me to pursue an occupation towards fighting for the injustices that Asian Americans go through. When writing these essays, the AANAPISI program allowed me a space to sit down and finish this work. Not only did they create a space where I felt comfortable enough to sit down and study, but being a part of this program allowed me to reflect and shine light into my experiences as an Asian American and challenged me to ask my family their stories as well. Without this AANAPISI funded program I would definitely have a different story to tell about my time at Irvine Valley College and would not be so rooted in my identity as much as I am today.