

Testimony for Jobs Conference Committee

John Yang, Chair, Minnesota Hmong Chamber of Commerce

May 16, 2022

Thank you Mr. Chair and members of the committee,

My name is John Yang, and I am the Chair of the Minnesota Hmong Chamber of Commerce (“Hmong Chamber”). On behalf of the Hmong Chamber, I am here in support of the important provision to invest in Asian Minnesotans within the House Jobs omnibus bill that would grant resources to support the economic recovery within Asian Minnesotan communities.

In addition to being the Chair of the Hmong Chamber, I also serve in the US Air Force. My dedication to serving my country is the same dedication that brings me here today in service to my community, a dedication that is common among many small business owners. Our businesses and nonprofit organizations serve the needs of our community, but many entrepreneurs and business operators need support to grow and thrive.

This past weekend, hundreds of AAPI small business owners came together at our first annual MN AAPI Small Business Expo, hosted by the Hmong Chamber and partners. Our partners consisted of businesses, non profit organizations, state and federal agencies. We all came together in solidarity so we can better serve our community. We also heard however, at first-hand the struggles that many of these Asian-owned businesses are experiencing, especially because of the pandemic, civil unrest, and the rise in anti-Asian hate. There are many businesses asking for loan assistance, many are closing down for good, and many selling their business because it is no longer profitable.

This is a crucial time for us. With proper assistance, we can help businesses learn how to navigate the challenges of our time and thrive.

Small businesses form the backbone of our Asian communities and our state as a whole. There are over 15,000 Asian small businesses in Minnesota with a total of over \$4 billion in sales. These businesses also employ over 27,000 workers in our state with a combined payroll of \$700 million. Investments into Asian small businesses are investments into Minnesota's economy, workforce, and overall well being.

This is why we support the \$1 million provision to help our underserved AAPI community with resources to provide grants, outreach, and technical assistance to MN Asian small businesses, nonprofits, and families through the Coalition of Asian American Leaders. These resources would invest in Asian Minnesotan communities to continue to strengthen our workforce and build financial stability.

In light of the many struggles that our Asian communities are facing, now is the time for real investments to help stabilize our communities. So that we can continue to build diversity, equality and inclusion in our state of Minnesota. Please join us in supporting this provision to invest in Asian communities in Minnesota. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you..

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