

## Public Witness Testimony of Julie Ajinkya

Title: Senior Vice President

Organization: APIA Scholars

House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and  
Related Agencies - FY 2023

May 26, 2022

Chairwoman DeLauro, Ranking Member Cole, and members of the Subcommittee:

My name is Julie Ajinkya and I am the Senior Vice President of APIA Scholars, an organization focused on the goal of dramatically improving the outcomes of Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) students by ensuring access to affordable and high-quality educational opportunities and student success programming. Thank you for inviting me to submit testimony for FY23 Appropriations on behalf of the Department of Education's Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISI) program and the students it serves, specifically for an increase in funding for AANAPISIs to \$100 million annually, which would allow them to be funded at a per-institution and per-student level commensurate with other Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs).

I would like to first begin by thanking all of you for the commitment you have shown to AANAPISIs and AANHPI students by increasing spending for the AANAPISI program in FY2022; you all made a significant down payment for these schools and institutions by more than doubling funding for AANAPISIs compared to the prior fiscal year, from \$5 million to more than \$10 million per year. This increase in funding will allow AANAPISIs to better serve first-generation and low-income AANHPI students in higher education—indeed, nearly half of AANHPI students attend AANAPISIs and these colleges and universities enroll and serve about three quarters of all low-income AANHPI students. These institutions are geographically distributed throughout the U.S., as well as U.S. territories in the Pacific, including American Samoa, Guam, Palau, Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Marshall Islands. The largest concentration of eligible AANAPISIs are in the West and the Pacific, but the states with the most institutions emerging in status are in the South and the Midwest. In fact, between 2010 and 2020, the AAPI population was the fastest growing racial group in the U.S.<sup>i</sup>

Today, we would like to build upon that down payment and are requesting that you increase funding for AANAPISIs to \$100 million annually, which would allow them to be funded at a per-institution and per-student level commensurate with other MSIs, like Hispanic Serving Institutions. Ideally, this appropriation would be divided as **\$30 million in discretionary funding under Title III, Part A and \$70 million in mandatory funding for Title III, Part F, for a total of \$100 million in AANAPISI program funding for Fiscal Year 2023.** This critical division would address the need for additional mandatory funding, given statutory barriers that limit the amount of discretionary funding AANAPISIs can receive if they also serve students from other underserved populations.

This funding is critical because of the impact AANAPISIs have on the students they serve, particularly because many of these students are the first in their families to go to college, come from low-income backgrounds, are often dual-language learners, or need additional educational

support. We often hear from our network of APIA students that they appreciate their AANAPISI programs “understanding their identities and how it shapes their college experience.” For example, Kristine Jan C. Espinoza, a proud AANAPISI alum from the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM), shared how attending an AANAPISI was a critical opportunity to be mentored by AANHPI faculty and be encouraged to pursue further graduate education. Espinoza cherishes how she felt like she belonged on campus by being around students who looked like her, learning from AANHPI mentors, and appreciates how even the physical campus environment reflected cultural elements she was familiar with. Espinoza, now a doctoral student at a dual AANAPISI and Hispanic-Serving Institution (University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV)), focuses on researching AANAPISIs and other MSIs and has been leading an effort to disaggregate data at the university.

We are requesting this funding increase because AANAPISIs have been chronically underfunded since their establishment and until last year were the lowest-funded category of MSIs per capita. Disappointingly, while 165 institutions have been identified by the U.S. Dept. of Education as eligible AANAPISIs, only 30 of those institutions receive AANAPISI funding. For reference, the FY2021 funding is \$59,606 per AANAPISI compared to \$589,167 per Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). If Congress were to request equitable funding of all 165 eligible AANAPISIs at the same level as HSIs, the AANAPISI program would require an annual funding amount of \$100 million dollars. I want to make clear, however, that any increase in AANAPISI funding should not come at the expense of other MSIs.

## **Impact**

The impact of AANAPISIs cannot be understated. AANAPISIs enroll 40% of all AANHPI undergraduates though AANAPISIs only make up only 5% of all colleges and universities in the United States, and their collective enrollment is approximately 8% of the nation’s total undergraduate enrollment.<sup>ii</sup> Three quarters of low-income AANHPI students attend an AANAPISI,<sup>iii</sup> and AANAPISIs confer a large concentration of both associate's and bachelor's degrees to AANHPI students. AANAPISIs also provide critical support for students through programs like academic tutoring, counseling, partnerships with community-based organizations serving AANHPIs, and conducting critical research and data collection for AANHPI subpopulations to better serve them in the future.

AANHPI students also have wide disparities in educational attainment, which often goes unnoticed because of the way these incredibly diverse populations are often lumped together in the “model minority” myth. Despite a perception of universally high educational achievement, there are significant differences in educational attainment between AANHPI ethnic sub-groups. For example, approximately half of Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander students leave college without earning a degree, which is three-to-five times the likelihood of dropping out compared to East Asians and South Asians.

Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students, specifically, face additional challenges. As Robert Teranishi, Professor of Social Science and Comparative Education at UCLA states, “There is a particularly disturbing demographic trend that is pointing to downward intergenerational mobility within the NHPI communities. We are seeing a decline in NHPI college enrollment and the bachelor’s degree attainment rate of younger Guamanians, Native Hawaiians, and Samoans (18-24 years of age) is lower compared to the older cohort of these populations (55-64 years of age).

As a result, the gap between NHPI sub-groups and the national average is increasing, rather than decreasing.<sup>iv</sup>

Increased financial support for the AANAPISI program is also necessitated by changing demographics within the United States. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the Asian population in the United States doubled from 2010 and 2020, increasing from 12.6 million to 25.6 million; the population is projected to hit 46 million by 2060.<sup>v</sup> Consequently, an increased focus, and financial commitment, to the AANHPI population is necessary to provide equitable access to post-secondary education opportunities as a larger number of AANHPI students begin to enroll in college.

The imperative for increasing AANAPISI funding is more urgent than ever given the increase in racist attacks against individuals of AANHPI descent in the wake of the COVID pandemic over the past two years. AANHPI students are experiencing more racism and discrimination and this funding will help institutions expand their capacity to respond to the unique challenges faced by AANHPI students today. As Arlene Daus-Mabual, Director for Asian American and Pacific Islander Student Services and Faculty Lecturer in Asian American Studies at San Francisco State University, argues, “Interventions and services that center on race and ethnicity play a central role in college student development. That is why AANAPISIs are so important for our community. It is imperative to create spaces within higher education where students learn about their ethnic identity, [and] how to critically question and analyze the root of problems of the oppression we face.”

Research also demonstrates that AANAPISIs are utilizing their resources to respond to the unique needs of their students and engage in a range of initiatives that aim to increase access to and success in college. These grant-funded activities improve how AANAPISIs deliver student services, make improvements to curricular and academic program development, increase their capacity to improve leadership and mentorship opportunities, and contribute to faculty and staff development.<sup>vi</sup> Longitudinal data that tracked AANHPI students in AANAPISI-funded programs against a comparable group of AANHPI students who did not participate in the AANAPISI-funded program demonstrated that these programs have added value relative to academic performance, credit accumulation, persistence, degree attainment, and transfer rates.<sup>vii</sup>

One example of this added value is at De Anza College, an institution located in Cupertino, CA with AANHPI students comprising nearly 40% of the total enrollment. De Anza used their AANAPISI grant to pair developmental English with an AANHPI literature course, including wrap-around supports with an embedded counselor. Research showed that the students who participated in this program passed their developmental course at a higher rate, were more likely to transition from developmental to college-level English, and were more likely to earn associate’s degrees—all in less time.<sup>viii</sup> With increased funding, more institutions would be able to serve their students and improve their outcomes like De Anza College has.

Thank you for your continued support of the AANAPISI program. We look forward to continuing to work alongside you, and be a resource for you, as you push to ensure that more AANAPISIs receive the funding they need to best serve the AANHPI students and others that enroll now and

in the future. We hope that you will provide an annual AANAPISI program appropriation of \$30 million in discretionary funding and \$100 million in total funding for FY2023.

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<sup>i</sup> 7 U.S. Census Bureau, The Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Population: 2010, 2012, <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-12.pdf>. 21 Feb. 2022; U.S. Census Bureau, Race and Ethnicity in the United States: 2010 and 2020 Census, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/race-and-ethnicity-in-the-united-state-2010-and-2020-census.html>.

<sup>ii</sup> M. H. Nguyen, K. J. Espinoza, D. T.-L. Gogue, & D. Ding, Looking to the Next Decade: Strengthening Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions through Policy and Practice (Washington, D. C.: National Council of Asian Pacific Americans, 2020); National Center for Education Statistics, Table 306.10. Total Fall Enrollment in Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions, 2019, [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19\\_306.10.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_306.10.asp).

<sup>iii</sup> Congressional Research Service, Memorandum Regarding the Number of Institutions Potentially Eligible to Receive Grants Under the Assistance to Asian American and Native American and Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions Program (Washington, D.C.: Author, 2009).

<sup>iv</sup> 12 Teranishi, R. T., Le, A., Gutierrez, R. A., Venturanza, R., Hafoka, I., Toso-Lafaele Gogue, D., & Uluave, L. Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in Higher Education: A Call to Action (Washington, D.C.: 2019).

<sup>v</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, The Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Population: 2010, 2012, <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-12.pdf>. 21 Feb. 2022; U.S. Census Bureau, Race and Ethnicity in the United States: 2010 and 2020 Census, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/race-and-ethnicity-in-the-united-state-2010-and-2020-census.html>.

<sup>vi</sup> National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education, Partnership for Equity in Peer Education through Research (PEER): Findings from the First Year of Research on AANAPISIs (New York, NY: Author, 2013)

<sup>vii</sup> R. T. Teranishi, M. Martin, L. Bordoloi Pazich, C. M. Alcantar, & T-L. K. Nguyen, Measuring the Impact of MSI Funded Programs on Student Success: Findings from the Evaluation of Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (New York, NY: National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education and Asian and Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund, 2014).

<sup>viii</sup> Ibid.