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Asian American group releases groundbreaking community needs assessment report  
_Discrimination, underreporting of problems, and lack of services persist_

METRO DETROIT – Asian & Pacific Islander American Vote – Michigan has released *Rising Voices, Revealing Truths*, a comprehensive community needs assessment of the Asian Pacific Islander American community in Metro Detroit. The full report is available online now at [www.apiavotemi.org](http://www.apiavotemi.org).

The first official report release event will be a legislative drop-off day in Lansing on **Thursday, February 28**th. APIAVote-MI Board of Director members and volunteers will be visiting Metro Detroit legislators to deliver the report and encourage them to make policy decisions that align with the findings and recommendations outlined in this report.

“The 2010 Census showed that the local Asian American population has experienced significant increases over the past decade,” said Stephanie Gray Chang, President Emeritus of APIAVote-MI. “This was the perfect opportunity to learn more about our community members, begin to disaggregate data across our diverse community, and to discover the highest priority needs and differences.”

The project was a partnership with the Wayne State University Center for Urban Studies, to identify the sociopolitical needs of Asian Americans in Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties, where the greatest densities of Asian American reside in Michigan. Surveys focused on employment, education, immigration, civic participation, and family services. Following survey collection, APIAVote-MI conducted focus groups to gain further insight into identified needs.

APIAVote-MI Needs Assessment Project Coordinator, Prasanna Vengadam said: “The report provides a clear picture of the Asian American community needs in Southeast Michigan. While the community is diverse in ethnicity and numbers, the issues are consistently the same. APIAVote-MI has shed light on how marginalized and underreported this fastest growing minority is.”

The report highlights the experiences of hundreds of Asian Americans in Metro Detroit, uncovering important needs in the community. Below are a few highlights from the report:

- **19.9%** of Asian American respondents in Metro Detroit are unemployed, while only **31.4%** have full time employment. 
  Unemployed Asian Americans struggle to find gainful employment while others piece together jobs without full benefits and job security. While many participants shared experiences of employment discrimination, cultural insensitivity and stereotyping, some stated that they had not experienced discrimination in the workplace at all. Some Asian Americans under-report
discrimination or insensitivity in the workplace, feeling that reporting would not result in positive outcomes.

- **Asian Americans faced the “glass ceiling”** and have not been able to advance as managers or faced challenges with their own managers. Many pointed out that differences in (presumed) language ability or workplace culture may determine whether or not someone is offered opportunities for advancement in the workplace.

- **Bullying and cultural insensitivity are largely unaddressed in schools.** 68.6% of Southeast Asian Americans, 47.1% of South Asian Americans, and 28.2% of East Asian Americans reported being bullied in school. 73.2%, 35.9%, and 37.3% respectively reported experiencing discrimination in schools. Many participants shared that some children are teased or made to feel uncomfortable when they bring ethnic foods to school.

- **Asian Americans in Metro Detroit face significant immigration and citizenship hurdles along with racial profiling while crossing the border.** While many Asian Americans in Metro Detroit are citizens, a large segment is legal permanent residents or visa holders. The long wait times for visas and green cards are major obstacles facing Asian Americans in Metro Detroit. Many feel that the citizenship process is too arduous or complicated. Asian Americans across ethnic groups in Metro Detroit experience racial profiling when crossing the border to Canada or with airport security.

- **While Asian Americans in Metro Detroit are involved in school and neighborhood organizations, electoral participation is still lacking.** Asian Americans in Metro Detroit are highly involved in schools, ethnic or cultural associations, and religious organizations. Asian Americans do not feel that candidates spend enough time getting to know the Asian American community. Voter registration and mobilizations of Asian American voters remains necessary to ensure fuller civic participation.

- **Taboos regarding mental health and social services are barriers to adequately addressing needs of Asian American Families in Metro Detroit.** Mental health remains a taboo subject in the Metro Detroit Asian American community. Newly emigrated Asian American seniors face health access issues due to high costs or lack of culturally appropriate health services. The generation gap between immigrant generation and second generation poses challenges for many Asian American families.

The 118-page report includes recommendations for policy makers, employers, school administrators, social service providers, and community leaders.

“It is our hope that the data presented in this report will help tell a richer, more thorough and nuanced story of Asian American experiences and challenges in Metro Detroit,” said Theresa Tran, President of APIAVote-MI, “Often, we are viewed as a monolithic group or as the ‘model minority,’ which can mislead people to believe that on the whole, Asian Americans are doing well, which is not always the case. This report can serve as a starting point for various Metro Detroit stakeholders to be better equipped to address the unique needs that exist within the Asian American community.”

In addition to launching a West Michigan APIA needs assessment project, APIAVote-MI plans to leverage the findings from this project to develop community organizing and awareness initiatives
around employment, education, immigration, and civic participation, and to continue programs that increase youth leadership.

This project was supported by the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan Knight Donor Advised Fund, Wayne State University Center for Urban Studies, and W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote - Michigan is a nonpartisan nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that serves the Asian Pacific Islander American community through civic participation, advocacy, and education. For more information, please visit www.apiavotemi.org.

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