

BUILDING POWER
HONORING RESISTANCE
CELEBRATING CULTURE



2020 APIC POLICY AGENDA



ASIAN PACIFIC ISLANDER COALITION
OF WASHINGTON STATE

Mission & Values

The **Asian Pacific Islander Coalition** (APIC) was created after the 1996 Welfare Reform Act significantly impacted and reduced non citizens' federal eligibility for public assistance programs. Recognizing the need for a collective voice advocating for the rights and equity of foreign-born Asian and Pacific Islanders, APIC formed to lobby the Washington State legislature to address the gap created by federal legislation. Over the last (almost) 25 years, APIC has built on this legacy to bring together Asian and Pacific Islanders including immigrants, refugees, and citizens around Washington state, in order to use our collective strength to empower our community.

The Asian Pacific Islander Coalition (APIC) is dedicated to advancing and restoring the civil and human rights of and racial and economic justice for all Asians and Pacific Islanders in solidarity with Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities.

In order to achieve this mission, APIC is guided by the following values and behaviors

Honoring Our History

Preserving and learning from the past

Celebrating unique stories, the successes as well as the struggles, pain, and disappointment.

Nourishing Community

Creating spaces for learning, reflection through cultural and spiritual arts and literary expression

Building with love, compassion, and empathy

Lifting one another up

Leading With Courage & Passion

Embracing difference and leaning into discomfort

Celebrating success and acknowledging the wisdom of failure

Building Power & Solidarity

Acknowledging that our ancestors are always with us

Recognizing the interconnectedness of our oppression

Grounding our work in the struggles of Indigenous communities

Intergenerational Wisdom

Centering the voices and lived experiences of oppressed communities

Acknowledging the intersections of privilege and oppression

Fighting against white supremacy through an anti-racist lens

Committed to Equity & Justice

Preserving and learning from the past

Celebrating unique stories, the successes as well as the struggles, pain, and disappointment.

Modeling Integrity

Moving at the speed of trust and consensus

Valuing transparency

Why a policy agenda?

APIC's policy agenda lays out a vision for a world that Asian American and Pacific Islanders need and deserve, and how our state can support that vision through robust, equitable, and impactful policies. This policy agenda aims to connect the values we have seen, heard, and felt in our community to a larger political system that represents and serves us. At the core of this policy agenda is the belief that we are the experts of our own lives, and that the people most impacted must always be centered in the solutions. With that, we acknowledge that this is a living document that must grow and evolve along with our community overtime. It is not a stand alone document, but rather a generative tool that we will use to hold listening sessions, build political education, hold decision-makers accountable, and more. It is the first iteration of a larger project to create alignment, vision, and power in our community.

We identified our top issue areas:

- 4** **Immigration Justice**
- 6** **Healthcare**
- 8** **Economic Justice**
- 10** **Criminal Justice**
- 12** **Gender Equity and LGBTQ+ Rights and Justice**
- 14** **Electoral Justice**
- 16** **Education**
- 18** **Environmental Justice**
- 20** **COVID-19**

Immigration Justice

In order for AAPI immigrants in Washington State to live full, safe, and healthy lives, we need safe and supportive institutions and policies that serve all individuals regardless of immigration status.

Why is this important?

Because of the 1996 Welfare Reform Act, many immigrants are not eligible for safety net programs for the first five years of their residence, and fears over public charge have discouraged more immigrants from accessing services.

Of the over 800,000 AAPIs living in Washington state, around half are foreign-born. This includes around 60,000 undocumented AAPIs (there are around 1.7 million undocumented AAPIs nationwide).¹

73% of Asian Americans in Washington speak a language other than English at home, and of those, more than 44% speak English less than “very well.”²

About 60,707 Asian Americans in Washington (10%) live in poverty and about 7,951 NHPs in Washington (17%) live in poverty, signifying the need for public assistance.

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Contrary to mainstream narratives, there is a high level of socioeconomic, ethnic and linguistic/cultural diversity among AAPI groups. For example, the median income for Indian households is \$115,105, whereas the median income for Hmong households is \$53,717.

To that end, APIC supports the following policy recommendations:

Expand LEP Pathways: LEP funding promotes economic self-sufficiency for refugees and immigrants through job training programs, ESL classes, and work support which provides a solid base for job opportunities and naturalization. LEP also gives access to seniors seeking health and social services. LEP Pathways funding was cut after the recession and has not since been restored to the original amount.

Increase funding for Naturalization Services: The Washington State's naturalization program helps refugees and immigrants become citizens, through assistance with the citizenship application, English and civics classes, and interview preparation. Elderly and disabled refugees and immigrants are the primary recipients of the naturalization program

Allocate funding to the Legal Defense Fund: Under the law, immigrants are not guaranteed access to a lawyer and often find themselves in immigration court without legal representation. This fund is necessary to provide immigrants with the proper resources and tools they need to stay in their community, regardless of if they can afford an attorney.

Expand eligibility for unemployment benefits: With one of the largest economic crises in history looming, undocumented workers are just as deserving of access to unemployment insurance. Expanding unemployment benefits to all is necessary in supporting and uplifting all immigrants.

Protect undocumented immigrants: With the passage of Keep Washington Working and Courts Open to All, our state government should continued to prioritize the safety of undocumented Washingtonians and minimize the power and actions of federal immigration enforcement agencies. This includes continuing to end any inappropriate collaboration between government agencies and immigration enforcement agencies, increase the power and frequency of gubernatorial pardons, and ending for-profit detention centers.

Healthcare

In order for AAPIs in Washington State to live healthy lives, we need access to a full range of affordable and quality healthcare services regardless of race, ability, income, age, immigration status, or English proficiency.


Why is this important?

Individuals in Washington who primarily speak a language other than English are less likely to have health insurance, see a health provider regularly, or follow instructions for medical care. ³73% of Asian Americans in Washington speak a language other than English at home.

In 2017, 7.3 of Asian Americans and 8.3 percent of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders were uninsured compared with 5.9 percent of non-Hispanic whites. ⁴

AAPI face stark health disparities. In 2017, tuberculosis was 35 times more common in Asian Americans than among non-Hispanic whites. The incidence rate of tuberculosis for Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders is higher than in any other population. Asian Americans are 40 percent more likely to be diagnosed with diabetes than non-Hispanic white Americans.

They are also 80 percent more likely to be diagnosed with end-stage renal disease. In 2017, suicide was the leading cause of death for Asian Americans ages 15 to 24.



To that end, APIC supports the following policy recommendations:

Provide healthcare access for all: Affordable and accessible health coverage, including behavioral health and long term care, is integral to addressing health disparities and creating a healthy society.

Support community health and senior centers: Funding and support for our community health and senior centers address important gaps in our health-care system. Community health centers provide LEP and low-income AAPI with culturally responsive health services. Culturally responsive senior centers provide services to our elderly AAPI who have unique needs that are often not met by other providers.

Ensure continued funding for healthcare and dental coverage for COFA communities: Through the COFA Islander Healthcare program, and the subsequent inclusion of dental coverage in this plan, Washington State has helped closed the gaps for COFA residents who are not eligible for Medicaid. We should continue to fund these programs and ensure that they provide the range of healthcare coverage in parity with Medicaid.

Economic Justice

In order for AAPIs in Washington State to have the resources to support ourselves, our families, and our communities, we need an equitable and just economic system that works in service of all people.

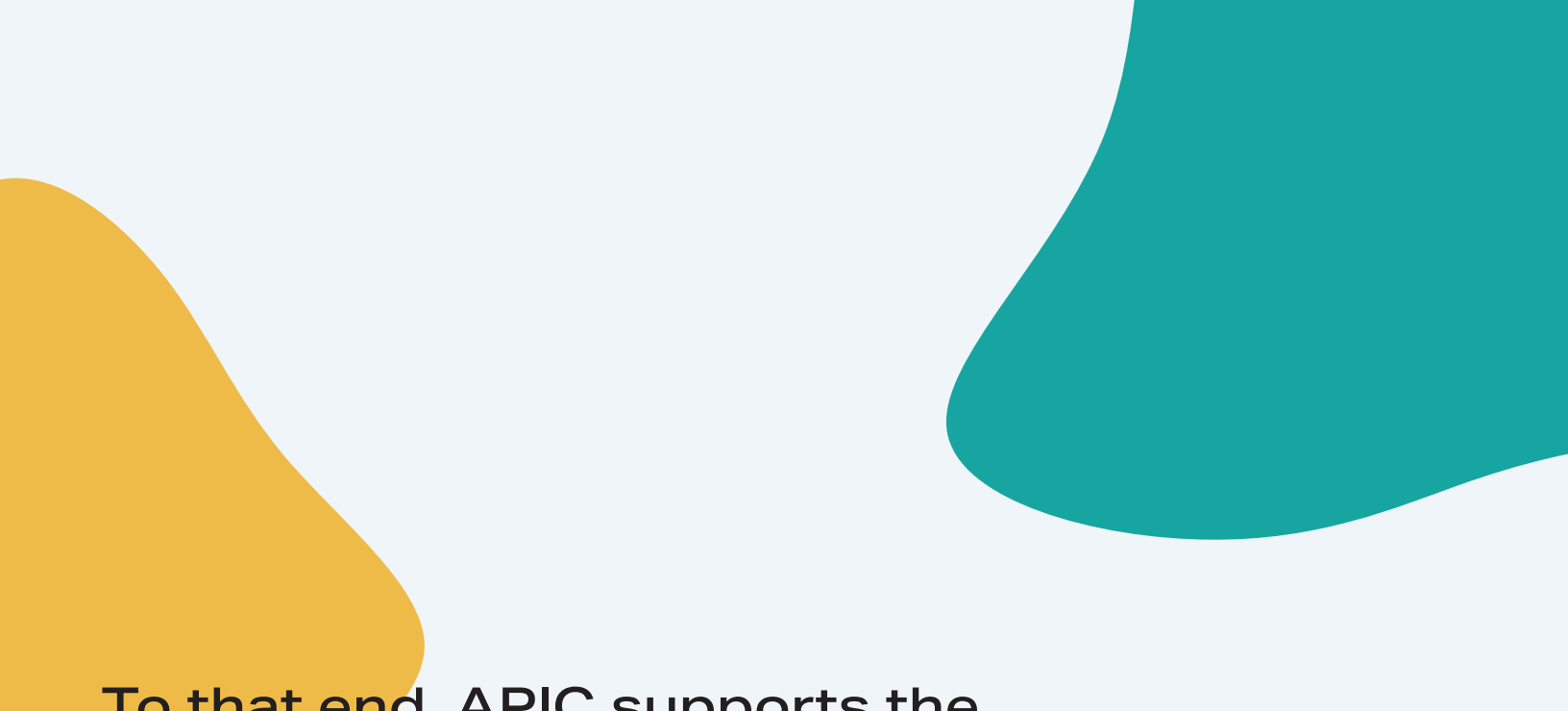
Why is this important?

About 60,707 Asian Americans in Washington (10%) live in poverty and about 7,951 NHPIs in Washington (17%) live in poverty.⁵

Washington State has the most regressive tax code in the country. Working and middle class families pay a much greater share of their income in taxes than those who are wealthy. This disadvantages low-income and working class people of color.

About 19% of AA and 23% of NHPI are in Washington State's poorest 20%, who pay the largest tax rate of all Washingtonians. The poorest AAPI Washingtonians pay 17% of their income in taxes, while the wealthiest pay around 3%.

About 40% of AA and 67% of NHPI in Washington State are renters.⁶



To that end, APIC supports the following policy recommendations:

Expand and modernize the Working Family Tax Credit (WFTC):

Enacting WFTC as a well-funded state version of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) that expands eligibility to immigrant workers, family care providers, younger workers, and students would help address the vast wealth gap between White families and families of color.

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Reform our inequitable tax code: By enacting taxes on concentrated sources of wealth such as capital gains for estates and mansions, we can be less reliant on a regressive sales tax and generate revenue for public programs and policies that benefit all working families.

Ensure rent relief and eviction protections for all: The Washington State Legislature should ensure that Washingtonians struggling to pay rent during the current public health and economic crisis are not unfairly burdened by accumulating rent payments and the threat of eviction, and access to relief should not be impacted by individual Washingtonian's immigration status or language ability.

Criminal Justice Reform

In order for AAPIs in Washington State to live in safe and supportive environments where they are seen in their full humanity, feel supported by their community, and live free from police violence and incarceration, we need to transform the punitive and racist nature of our criminal legal system to policies and programs that enable accountability, restoration, healing, and harm-reduction.

Why is this important?

The model minority myth creates an inaccurate representation of the issues impacting AAPI and the broad categorization of us as a singular racial group often erases the stark disparities between ethnic groups. This includes how AAPI are impacted by the criminal legal system.

Pacific Islander students are disproportionately disciplined in schools compared to white students. Because of the link between discipline and the increased likelihood of being incarcerated, Pacific Islander students are at a higher risk of being harmed by the criminal legal system.

Rates of incarceration for Pacific Islanders have increased 144% between 2002 and 2010.⁸

Southeast Asian refugees are also disproportionately targeted for the school to jail to deportation pipeline, hurting countless families in our communities who escaped political violence.

While police violence disproportionately targets Black communities, AAPI communities are still impacted. The police shootings of Tommy Le, Iosia Faletogo, Jessey Sarey, Isaiah Obet, and Enosa Strickland Jr. tragically evidence how police violence is pervasive and widespread in AAPI communities as well.

To that end, APIC supports the following policy recommendations:

Pass the Treatment and Recovery Act: This legislation would invest in public-health based approaches to substance use disorders by increasing state funding for treatment and recovery programs, reclassifying drug offenses from criminal charges to civil infractions where people can get the treatment they need, and increasing public health education around substance use.

Reduce the funding and power of local police departments: Police departments in cities across Washington State have inflated budgets, while social services and programs are struggling for dollars. Reducing police budgets and reallocating funds to housing, health, and human services programs, will help minimize police and community violence and invest in community safety.

Invest in diversion programs: State and local governments should increasingly look at options that divert people away from incarceration and the school-to-prison pipeline and instead rely on programs that equip people with the tools, resources, and support they need.

Improve the pardon system: Reviewing, expanding, and improving Washington State's pardon system, will allow more detained and incarcerated individuals to be reunited with their families and communities.

Gender Equity and LGBTQ Rights

In order for AAPI women, girls, and LGBTQ+ individuals to be able to live lives with dignity and autonomy, we need the resources, programs, and policies that allow us to choose if and when to have children, to live in our identities authentically and unapologetically, and to thrive in communities free from oppression and racism.

Why is this important?


Of the 163 million women in the U.S., 10.7 million, or 6.5 percent are AAPI, and over 50 percent of all AAPI women are of reproductive age. A study found that 6 percent of women obtaining abortions identified as AAPI.⁹

Intimate partner violence cuts across racial lines. Nationally, 21 – 55% of Asian women in the U.S. report experiencing intimate physical and/or sexual violence during their lifetime, based on a compilation of disaggregated samples of Asian ethnicities in local communities.¹⁰

Pay inequities exist for AAPI women. Overall, AAPI women earn 90 cents per dollar. However, data disaggregation reflects deeper wage disparities: Nepalese, Burmese, Fijian, and Cambodian women are typically paid less than 60 percent—50 percent, 52 percent, 55 percent, and 57 percent respectively—of what white, non-Hispanic men are typically paid. And Indonesian, Tongan, Vietnamese, Thai, Laotian, Guamanian/Chamorro, Hawaiian, Samoan, Hmong, and Bangladeshi women all are typically paid less than 80 cents for every dollar typically paid to white, non Hispanic men.¹¹

Access to paid leave for AAPI women is also limited: Women of color are less likely to have access to any form of paid leave, although the differences vary—44 percent of Latinas, 40 percent of Asian American women, 37 percent of African American women, and 36 percent of white women do not have access to paid leave.

Many community members live at the intersections of being AAPI women and LGBTQ+ and experience oppressive policies in multiple ways.



To that end, APIC supports the following policy recommendations:

Approve Referendum 90: Referendum 90 will ensure that public schools provide inclusive, age and culturally appropriate comprehensive sexual health and affirmative consent education for all students. Comprehensive sex education has been linked to reducing sexual violence, unintended pregnancies, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

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Support access to the full range of reproductive health care, including contraceptive and abortion care: We need policies at the legislative and administrative levels that ensure that all individuals, including undocumented immigrants, have access to reproductive health care coverage.

Advance trans equality in healthcare: Our state legislators must ensure that Washington Apple Health covers gender-affirming interventions and medically necessary surgeries.



Electoral Justice

In order to have an informed AAPI electorate that is able to fully participate in the political process, we need linguistically, culturally, and geographically accessible voting processes, fair and transparent elections, and a democracy that respects and values the voice of all people.

Why is this important?


There are over 470,000 eligible AAPI voters in Washington State.¹³ Of eligible AAPI voters in the state, 26% are youth (18-29) and 36% are over the age of 50.

73% of Asian Americans in Washington speak a language other than English at home, and of those, more than 44% speak English less than “very well,” making language accessibility in voting processes especially important.

Turnout is 9% lower for Limited-English Proficient (LEP) than non-LEP registered voters, and 63% say that Asian language support at polling places would be useful.

When census data shows more than 10,000 people or 5% of the voting-age population have limited English proficiency in a defined area, the Voting Rights Act requires ballots to be translated to accommodate voters. However, AAPIs are the least likely demographic to fill out the census due to language barriers and lack of information.¹⁴

In the 2018 Asian American Voter Survey, 50% of Asian Americans received no contact or were unsure if they received contact about the election from the Democratic party and 60% reported the same from the GOP.

A large yellow abstract shape in the top right corner and a teal abstract shape in the bottom left corner, both with organic, flowing edges. The teal shape has a jagged, triangular cutout on its right side.

To that end, APIC supports the following policy recommendations:

Enforce the Washington Voting Rights Act: Ensuring that state and local governments are abiding by this law and taking action when provisions are violated, will protect the integrity of our local democracy.

Provide language translations for ballots, voting & voter registration materials: Increasing civic participation and voting accessibility is contingent on local governments providing voting resources in a wide variety of languages.

End disenfranchisement for incarcerated individuals: Currently, incarcerated individuals and formerly incarcerated individuals with outstanding Legal/Financial Obligations are not legally allowed to vote in Washington State. Removing these restrictions would create a more racially equitable democracy where all voices are valued.

Ensure fair redistricting to better represent AAPI communities: We need a representative Redistricting Commission that has Black, Indigenous, and People of Color members that seek and value community input in order to draw legislative and congressional districts that are fair and equitable.

Education

For young AAPIs in Washington State to achieve their full potential, we need a public education system that advances equitable, culturally responsive, and anti-racist curriculum and policies that ensure every child has the support they need in the classroom and community to thrive in school and beyond.

Why is this important?

Washington state has 1.15 million K-12 public schools students. Asian Americans are 8% and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders are 1.2% of the student population.¹⁵

While there is a persistent myth that AAPIs do not struggle with educational achievement, disaggregated data reveals a wide range of AA and NHPI educational attainment levels due to structural opportunity gaps.

Many AAPI immigrants require adequate support and quality education for English language learners.

AA and NHPI students often do not see themselves reflected in the education system, such as the educator workforce, curriculum, and family-school partnerships.

School discipline policies such as suspension and expulsion disproportionately punish students of color and have been cited as one of the primary factors in high dropout rates. Inequitable disciplinary policies have created the school to prison pipeline and perpetuated the opportunity gap.

To that end, APIC supports the following policy recommendations:

Approve Referendum 90: Referendum 90 ensures that public schools provide inclusive, age and culturally appropriate comprehensive sexual health and affirmative consent education for all students.

Restore Affirmative Action: Repealing Initiative 200 will restore affirmative action in higher education admissions, employment, and contract to ensure equitable opportunities for Washingtonians regardless of race or gender.

Fund English Language Learner (ELL) programs: Washington state ranks in the top ten for number of English Language Learners. This number continues to increase, and includes large numbers of students with AAPI backgrounds. ELL students' learning has been disrupted due to school closures, and the Washington state legislature must work to ensure that quality of education is not impacted by language ability.

Support universal early childhood education: All children in Washington including AAPIs deserve the best chance to succeed in life, and evidence shows that high-quality early learning lays a critical foundation for learning vital social, emotional, and cognitive skills. Currently, more than half of Washington state's children enter kindergarten without opportunities for early learning to gain these essential skills, and our state legislature must address this issue.

Implement student discipline reform: Washington state should implement statewide changes that mirror the recent decision by Seattle Public Schools to end their relationship with the Seattle Police Department, removing armed police officers from public schools.

Environmental Justice


In order for AAPIs in Washington State to live in health and thriving communities, we need policies that prepare for and mitigate the impacts of climate change, address environmental racism, honor indigenous communities and traditional ecological knowledge, and shape and sustain a healthy environment with clean air, drinkable water, and access to renewable energy.

Why is this important?

Environmental justice is a critical priority for AAPI communities because of how climate change and pollution affect our communities both in the U.S. and in the countries our families come from.

Historically, due to redlining policies, AAPI community members have only been allowed to live in areas with relatively poor air quality, higher levels of pollution, and less access to green spaces such as parks among other negative environmental indicators.

Many of the countries that AAPI communities come from are facing increasingly harsher climates and more intense climate events such as droughts and hurricanes.



To that end, APIC supports the following policy recommendations:

Seek input from Environmental Justice Task Force: The state legislature should follow the lead of the Environmental Justice Task Force, and disproportionately impacted communities when formulating all environmental/climate policy.

Lead with racial equity: State government should utilize the Environmental Health Disparity Map or equivalent analysis which includes racial/ethnic disparity data to guide equitable distribution of funds to mitigate harm caused by pollution and climate change.

COVID-19

In order for AAPIs in Washington State to navigate and recover from the pandemic, we need policies and programs that address the deep inequities and structural racism in our health care, economic, and safety net systems; center those most impacted by the global pandemic; and rebuild a social system that is rooted in justice and equity.

Why is this important?

The COVID-19 pandemic has upended our lives and exacerbated the racial and structural inequities in our health care, educational, and economic systems.

BIPOC communities represent a disproportionate percentage of COVID-19 cases. Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders have significantly higher hospitalization rates in King County than white people. And many AAPIs are disproportionately employed in low-wage industries that are also considered "essential", potentially placing their health at risk.

Racism has led to scapegoating, harassment, and even violence against the AAPI community. Since the start of the pandemic, national and local organizations have documented increased racial harassment against the AAPI community.¹⁶

COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on job loss. According to the Pew Research Center, the nationwide unemployment rate for Asian workers may have been as high as 20.3% in May. In Washington State, as of May 30, 2020, employment rates among all low-income workers decreased by 37.8% compared to January 2020.¹⁷

AAPIs make up 14% of the total workforce in the Seattle metropolitan area, and represent 16% of essential workers. Workers are overrepresented in the trucking, warehouse, and Postal Service industry groups. AAPIs make up 39% of total Postal Service workforce.¹⁸

To that end, APIC supports the following policy recommendations:

Ensure testing, treatment, and vaccinations: COVID-testing, medical treatment for patients, and vaccinations must be available to all, regardless of immigration status. State and local agencies should partner with community organizations and community health care centers to share information about testing centers and vaccination distributions, and provide materials in-language.

Extend and expand eviction moratorium and rent relief: As unemployment levels continue to reach historic levels, lawmakers must extend programs to support individuals hardest hit by the pandemic. Maintaining stable housing can help families avoid devastating economic hardship.

Combat anti-Asian discrimination: With the rise in anti-Asian racism, we need partnerships between community groups and local agencies to collect data/stories about anti-Asian harassment and funding to support community-led trainings about racism and bystander intervention.

Prioritize Data Collection and Disaggregation: We need to continue to disaggregate data in the collection of health data in King County and Washington state to better understand the impact of COVID in the AAPI community and how resources can and should be diverted.

Support Washington Immigrant Relief Fund: Establishing a \$40 million relief fund was a community-driven effort and represents a significant step to ensuring that undocumented immigrants who were excluded from safety net and stimulus funding can now access some support. Further support is necessary to ensure that the community is aware of and can access the program; additional funding can be raised to leverage this initial investment; and a long-term permanent safety net program is created so that no family is left without resources in the future.

- 1 <https://capaa.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/foreign-born.pdf>
- 2 https://capaa.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Washington-2020.API_FactSheet.pdf
- 3 <https://wahealthalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/2016-Disparities-in-Care-Report.pdf>
- 4 <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/reports/2020/05/07/484742/health-disparities-race-ethnicity/>
- 5 <https://budgetandpolicy.org/resources-tools/2019/10/2019-Brief-WA-Tax-Code-is-untapped-resource-for-racial-justice.pdf>
- 6 <https://capaa.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/homeownership.pdf>
- 7 <https://budgetandpolicy.org/resources-tools/2019/10/2019-Brief-WA-Tax-Code-is-untapped-resource-for-racial-justice.pdf>
- 8 <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/p10.pdf>
- 9 (See: NAPAWF factsheet on AAPIs and abortion care). There is still little data to understand the experiences of AAPI women in accessing abortion care.
- 10 (See: API institute on GBV for national stats.)
- 11 (See NWLC report.) AAPI women are overrepresented in both high wage and low wage workforces and experience a wage gap in both.
- 12 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6235267/>
- 13 <https://www.apiavote.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Washington-2020.pdf>
- 14 (Ramakrishnan & Wong, 2019).
- 15 <https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/migrantbilingual/pub-docs/20mar2017advisoryboardppt-ADA.pdf>
- 16 <https://www.advancingjustice-aajc.org/covid19>
- 17 <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/06/30/unemployment-rate-is-higher-than-officially-recorded-more-so-for-women-and-certain-other-groups/>
- 18 <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/data/women-on-the-front-lines-nearly-2-3-of-seattle-area-essential-workers-are-female/>