



Hamkae Center 2022 General Assembly Policy Priorities

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Improve Language Access in Virginia State Agencies

A statewide language access audit conducted by the Virginia Office of Diversity Equity and Inclusion in 2021 found that none of Virginia's state agencies were providing proper language access to linguistically marginalized communities* (such as disabled, non-English speaking, or multilingual Virginians). In Virginia, 7 of the top 10 languages spoken are Asian languages, including: Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Hindi, Arabic, Farsi, and Filipino. Additionally, over 36,000 Asian American Virginians are disabled, including hearing and visual impaired. With defined standards for language access, state agencies can use resources more efficiently and properly support the millions of Virginians impacted by language barriers, regardless of their English proficiency or ability status. **(Support: [HB1049/SB270](#), [HB987](#), [HB1221](#))**

**Linguistically marginalized communities: groups and individuals who "use any dominant spoken or sign language, and are not fully proficient in the dominant language" which in the United States is English.*

Cover All Kids

Access to health services and treatments during childhood are critical to a healthy life and development. However, not all children have access to these important resources. Currently, 13,000 children who are eligible for health coverage through FAMIS/Medicaid are uninsured and unable to access critical health services because they are undocumented. Of these children, approximately 2,500 are Asian American. Virginia has an opportunity to join 10 other states and D.C. in expanding state Medicaid coverage to give these kids a healthy start to life. **(Support [HB1012/SB484](#))**

Keep Voting Accessible

The voting age population of Asian Americans in Virginia grew by 30% from 2010 to 2020. Voter turnout, early voting, and absentee voting increased more than any other racial demographic group in 2020 because of recent voter access laws in Virginia. Proposals for voter identification and shortening early voting will negatively impact Asian American voters by restricting the conditions in which people can participate in democracy, decreasing the number of accessible voting opportunities for working-class and disabled voters, and disqualifying eligible votes because of non-Western naming conventions. **(Oppose: [HB24](#), [HB39](#), [HB46](#), [HB35/SB552](#))**

Educational Equity

Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) students across the Commonwealth should be properly acknowledged and supported in their educational experience. Nationwide studies have reported identity-based harassment and discrimination towards AAPI students have drastically increased since the COVID-19 pandemic. Virginia has nearly 95,000 AAPI students. Hamkae Center supports legislation that uplifts and protects the wellbeing of AAPI students.

(Support [HB371](#), [HB1179](#))

On the other hand, we oppose legislative proposals that would roll back diversity and equity by taking away local control from school divisions, limiting efforts by Governor's schools to increase the diversity of their student body, prohibiting the collection and analysis of admissions data, and effectively banning policies to ensure equity in historically discriminatory admissions processes. Governor's schools and local school divisions have created effective policies that maintain visibly open pathways to opportunity for qualified students from a range of backgrounds. **(Oppose [HB127](#))**

Invest in our Communities

Investing in our communities is critical for generational change. We have an opportunity through the state budget, by proposing budget amendments and protecting line items that would fund the priorities our communities care about the most. This investment also includes mandatory combined reporting – a proposal that would increase state revenue by nearly \$100 million annually. Large corporations and businesses should pay their fair share to take the burden off of small businesses and individual taxpayers. **(multiple bills)**