



Chinese American Service League
華人諮詢服務處
2024 POLICY AGENDA

CASL operates within four public policy areas:

1. Language Access
2. Racial Justice and Safety
3. Health Equity
4. Immigration

CASL is committed to a society free from structural racism and social inequities, enabling community members to thrive while living dignified lives. Our policy agenda is driven by the unique experiences and needs of community members who we have been proud to serve for over 45 years. Our valuable partners, current trends in AANHPI communities, and strategic plan shaping the future of our organization also inform our policy agenda. As the largest and most comprehensive social service agency in the Midwest, our policy agenda seeks to address issues directly impacting community members in this region that resonate with the reality of AANHPI communities across Illinois.

This is possible by:

- Amplifying the voices of our community members, staff, and AANHPI communities while addressing priority policy issues.
- Fostering community engagement through collaboration with strategic partners, programs, and elected officials.
- Educating and advocating for policy priorities through policy research and submissions for policy analysis.

1. LANGUAGE ACCESS

Policy Recommendation: Implement a statewide language access plan to reduce linguistic barriers by expanding equitable access to programs and services for Limited English proficiency (LEP) populations in all state and local agencies. Additionally, support continuous funding allocated for the Immigrant Services Line Item and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs.

Language access is a key policy priority to CASL as most clients and community members have English as a second language. AANHPI communities have an increased presence in social needs due to Limited English Proficiency (LEP). These challenges interfere in every facet of their lives, from seeking medical care, employment, public benefit housing, and even access to food. These harsh socio-economic challenges continue to wreak havoc in these communities unless faced head-on through continuous local, national, and federal policy and advocacy efforts.

- At the federal level, support the **Teach AANHPI History Act (H.R. 3434)** that requires universities, libraries, and museums to include AANHPI history in their American history curriculum to be eligible for grants administered by the U.S. Department of Education. It also requires Asian-Pacific American history to be included in tests administered by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).
- Expand federal funding for community-based organizations offering language services to AANHPI communities, address the national shortage of translators and interpreters needed for accessing federal programs, and include AANHPI individuals on language committees to better represent the needs of their communities.
- At the state level, support the **Language Equity and Access Act (SB 3726)** spearheaded by the Pan-Asian Voter Empowerment Coalition (PAVE), mandating and funding expanded language access for state agencies and creating a Division of Language Equity and Access to work with agencies to implement language access plans.
- In Illinois, CASL Supports increased funding for the **Immigrant Service Line Item (ISLI)** that provides funding for direct cash assistance to immigrants, citizenship application assistance, English



classes, DACA and citizenship application fee waivers, and resource navigation for immigrant, refugees, and asylum seekers.

2. RACIAL JUSTICE AND SAFETY

Policy Recommendation: Establish a comprehensive approach to advancing racial equity and just access to opportunities while protecting AANHPI communities from all forms of hate crimes.

The pandemic enabled a surge in racism and xenophobia associated with the increase in Anti-Asian hate crimes among Asian Americans in the United States. Through our Anti-Hate Action Center, CASL will continue tracking and responding to hate crimes in the Midwest while offering holistic, culturally relevant mental health support with legal services to victims.

- At the federal level, CASL supports the **Neighbors Not Enemies Act (H.R 3610)** repealing WWII-era statute authorizing the President to apprehend and remove immigrants from a nation upon which the United States has declared war. This law discriminated against Japanese, Italian, and German immigrants in the past.
- At the state level, support the hate crimes training for law enforcement bill (**HB 5368 and SB 3552**) that will strengthen the hate crime training requirements for law enforcement and help keep all Illinois communities safe.
- At the city level, CASL is collaborating with the City of Chicago Commission on Human Relations, the Department of Police, and the Office of Emergency Management and Communications on the implementation of the **CHI vs. Hate ordinance** to ensure the 311 intake system and operators can accommodate languages spoken by people living in communities impacted by hate crimes and that hate crimes data is collected and disseminated according to the legislative intent.
- In Chicago, CASL advocates for the expansion of safety measures by law enforcement agencies to protect AANHPI communities from hate crimes and supports community healing initiatives and policies that expand resources to increase the reporting of hate crimes in the region.



3. HEALTH EQUITY

Policy Recommendation: Support policies that eliminate structural barriers to healthcare, advance health equity, eliminate chronic conditions, and increase access to health insurance. Reduce stigma associated with mental health support while offering personalized clinical treatment through linguistically integrated behavioral health services for all AANHPI age groups.

Health disparities are differences in the incidence, prevalence, and mortality of a disease and the related adverse health conditions among specific population groups. Research shows that despite the “model minority myth” surrounding Asians, many tend to engage in poor health behaviors. Asian Americans have a high prevalence of chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease, obesity, and diabetes.

Achieving health equity requires addressing social determinants of health and disparities for AANHPIs. Focusing on health equity will break systematic racial and socioeconomic barriers to healthcare, ensuring everyone has access to a healthy community irrespective of race, educational attainment, or financial status. It also focuses on ongoing societal efforts to overcome economic, social, and other healthcare barriers to eliminate preventable health disparities among AANHPIs. The domains of health equity we focused on include:

I. Access to healthcare

The pandemic spurred anti-Asian rhetoric, reinforcing fear in AANHPI communities. Such unprecedented events affect the mental and physical health of these populations.

- At the federal level, support the **Stop Mental Health Stigma Act (H.R. 3680)** that requires the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to develop and implement an outreach education strategy regarding behavioral health issues among the AANHPI population. The strategy would promote behavioral and mental health while reducing the stigma associated with mental health conditions and substance abuse among these populations.



- At the federal level, support the **Mental Health Workforce and Language Access Act (H. R. 3817)** which will increase language access to behavioral health services at eligible health centers for LEP populations.
- At the federal level, CASL supports policies that foster the ability for the Behavioral Health and Clinical Services to become a Federally Qualified Health Center and advance support toward primary care for community members.
- At the state level, CASL supports the Licensure Simplification Omnibus to remove unnecessary barriers for counselors and social workers licensed in other states.
- At the state level, CASL supports the **Family Caregiver Income Tax Credit (HB 4676)** which establishes a family caregiver income tax to support unpaid caregivers as they support their loved ones.
- At the state level, CASL supports **HB 4919** which amends the IL Act on Aging about the SEIU rate increase proposal.
- At the state level, CASL supports the creation of a **Caregiver Portal (HB 4677)** to serve as a “one-stop shop” for family caregivers, providing easy access to a broad spectrum of resources, including state, federal, nonprofit, and professional caregiving information. By establishing a comprehensive online portal, the Act will centralize vital resources, offering caregivers streamlined access to information and tools necessary for informed and compassionate caregiving.

II. Nutrition

Policy Recommendation: Support policies that foster healthy food choices that are culturally appropriate for AANHPI communities, enhance nutrition benefits, and catalyze the expansion of CASL food programs through continuous funding.

CASL is committed to advancing health equity through nutrition by unraveling the complexities of chronic conditions in AANHPI communities caused by poor nutrition options. Through our food programs, we are fostering robust nutrition standards in the Senior Meal Program, child development/school-age center, and out-of-school programs for all ages to reduce chronic conditions of obesity in our community.



- At the State level, CASL and other food advocates support supplementing minimum amounts per household for SNAP, especially during ongoing inflation, to reduce food insecurity in AANHPI communities, counteract the threats to WIC, and support farm bill opportunities.
- At the state level, CASL supports Medicaid Section 1115 Waiver approval for IL that includes recommendations for implementing food and nutrition benefits.
- At the state level, CASL supports **Breakfast After the Bell legislation (SB 2209)** to remove barriers keeping low-income children from accessing school breakfast.
- In Illinois, CASL supports the implementation of Summer EBT, the first new federal nutrition program in 50 years with significant potential to reduce child hunger.
- At all levels, CASL supports more funding from federal, national, and local agencies to expand food programs serving more seniors plagued by food insecurity.

III. Affordable housing

Policy Recommendation: Strengthen the pathway to homeownership for AANHPI communities and foster the expansion of housing counseling programs and grants to support minor repairs for seniors and disabled AANHPI community members.

CASL supports the availability of safe, affordable housing options for community members and policies that foster home ownership, mortgage assistance, and foreclosure prevention.

IV. Economic stability

Policy Recommendation: Strengthen federal and state poverty reduction efforts targeting AANHPI communities and invest in eradicating root causes of poverty, including structural barriers through community empowerment.



CASL is committed to advancing equitable economic opportunity for community members who historically have been left out of the mainstream economy. People who lack steady employment are more likely to have poor health outcomes. Equitable economic development is a catalyst for improving health and transforming communities. CASL supports policies that advance economic equity and increase access to opportunities and living wages for disadvantaged AAPI communities. These include policies that connect community members to job opportunities while removing barriers to employment. CASL advocates for investment and more funding for workforce programs, childcare, and other incentives that will reduce unemployment, leading to a better quality of life for community members.

- At the federal level, CASL supports the **Universal Charitable Deduction Act (H.R. 3435 / S. 566)** which will increase giving to nonprofits
- At the state level, CASL supports the federal child tax that would expand access to the child tax credit and eliminate penalties for larger families.
- At the state level, CASL supports increased Child Tax Credit for Illinois families who earn less than the median income.
- In Illinois, CASL supports strengthening the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) by increasing the grant to 50% of the Federal Poverty Level to help families come out of extreme poverty and meet their basic needs.

V. Education

Policy Recommendation: Support AANHPI communities with resources promoting education, increase college readiness, and remove barriers to educational attainment that ensure full access to all educational opportunities for AANHPI students.

Education is a pathway for better jobs, access to reliable resources, and an overall improvement in quality of life. CASL supports policies that furnish AANHPI communities with resources promoting education across all levels, increasing college readiness, and removing barriers to early childhood educational



opportunities for AANHPIs. Our organization upholds workforce development in the early care sector, including scholarships, training programs, and simplified credentialing processes for AANHPIs.

- At the state level, CASL supports increasing Teen REACH funding to \$27.3 million. Teen REACH programs have not received rate increases to address the increased costs associated with inflation, materials, and the number of youths they serve. We advocate for the state to support Teen REACH providers by increasing their rate by six percent over the total amount the grant program is currently funded at \$21.4 million.
- At the state level, support **HB545, Combating Diaper Insecurity through the Child Care Assistance Program**, which provides funding for childcare providers accepting the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) subsidy to purchase diapers for families who need them.
- At the state level, CASL supports funding the Childcare Assistance Program (CCAP) at \$3.41 billion, with \$70 million designated to cover an expected increase in CCAP participation.
- At the state level, CASL supports allocating \$26 million to the Illinois State Board of Education's After School Programs line.
- At the state level, CASL advocates for the Childcare Assistance Program (CCAP) program to change policy to include eligibility for children with special needs/IEPs to qualify for CCAP, regardless of family income automatically.
- At the state level, CASL supports raising the CCAP eligibility guidelines to match the current City Preschool for All (PFA) federal poverty guidelines to 400 FPL level. Currently, CCAP at 225% FPL, if raised to PI/PFA eligibility will open more opportunities for families to qualify, especially when living in Chicago with the higher minimum wages.
- At the state level, CASL advocates for CCAP to follow Head Start eligibility guidelines to include households who receive SNAP benefits to qualify for CCAP automatically. Head Start recently changed its policies to include SNAP as a category to qualify, and we advocate for CCAP to include this requirement.



- At the state level, support changes to CCAP to provide automatic eligibility for Head Start/Early Head Start children and families **(HB 4760/SB 3578)**
- CASL advocates for additional funding through CCAP that supports more services to children with IEPs/special needs.
- In Illinois, CASL advocates for a system to allow children who require a paraprofessional for their special needs as a provider to be able to bill insurance to pay for staffing to support the child. This would allow providers/childcare industry to serve more children with needs outside the school district IEP minutes.

4. IMMIGRATION

Policy Recommendation: Oppose proposed draconian changes to the U.S. immigration system that would promote mandatory detention or deportation of arriving asylum seekers, cap asylum grants, and eliminate parole programs.

- At the federal level, CASL supports the Reuniting Families Act – to protect family-based immigration.
- Locally, CASL supports the protection of Chicago’s Sanctuary City status and the Welcoming City Ordinance that ensures undocumented residents are not prosecuted solely due to their immigration status.

