



ASIAN AMERICAN FEDERATION

2025 POLICY PRIORITIES

APRIL 2025



**IMMIGRATION
ANTI-ASIAN HATE
MENTAL HEALTH
NONPROFIT SUPPORT
ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
SENIORS/OLDER ADULTS
LANGUAGE ACCESS**

INTRODUCTION

Since 1989, the Asian American Federation (AAF) has been a leading force for Asian New Yorkers. Our mission is simple: to amplify the voices and improve the well-being of the pan-Asian American community. We do this through research, policy advocacy, public awareness, and by strengthening nonprofit organizations that serve our communities.

The 2024 presidential election brought drastic policy changes at the federal, state, and local levels. For New York's Asian American community, almost 70% of whom are foreign-born, these shifts have created deep uncertainty and anxiety as community members navigate the various impacts on their lives. Now more than ever, we recognize the urgency of our long-standing commitment to ensuring that the immigrants who power our city and state receive the support they need to thrive.

In response to a rapidly evolving policy landscape, we are working swiftly to equip, guide, and advocate for our 70 member and partner organizations as they provide essential services to over 2.1 million Asian New Yorkers across the state.

Our commitment to justice and equity for Asian immigrants drives our efforts to expand legal services, build advocacy knowledge that empowers our communities to take action, and combat misinformation by ensuring access to culturally relevant, accurate information.

In addition to our immigration work, we continue to deeply engage in addressing the pressing needs of Asian New Yorkers in the areas of anti-Asian hate, economic empowerment, mental health, and services for older adults. Through policy advocacy, capacity building, and direct support, we strive to ensure that our communities have the resources, protections, and opportunities they need to thrive.

Our 2025 Policy Priorities not only build on our strong legacy of advocacy but also respond boldly to emerging and urgent issues, ensuring meaningful progress for our communities.

From year to year, AAF's policy priorities are informed by:

1. Our expertise in Research, from our original reports and briefs that bring attention to key issues affecting Asian New Yorkers to our Data Center, AAF's data hub, developed in 2023, where our groundbreaking research is housed. AAF is also the only Asian Census Information Center in the Northeast.
2. Our working groups with over 70 member and partner organizations that focus on issues such as anti-Asian hate, civic engagement, immigration, language access, mental health, and older adult support; and
3. Our deep relationships within the community and across government and nonprofit sectors.

IMMIGRATION

Vision: Asian immigrants are welcomed into New York City and New York State and given the opportunity to work, support their families, and achieve their dreams in America.

Asian Americans have long been a driving force behind New York's economic, cultural, and social vitality. Over 2.1 million Asian New Yorkers, as the fastest-growing racial group in the state, power industries, revitalize neighborhoods, and shape the future of our communities. However, increasing anti-immigrant policies and sentiment threaten their safety, dignity, and opportunities. As our community faces extraordinary challenges again, it is even more urgent that New York steps in with real support, ensuring legal protections, resources, and community investment and protection so Asian New Yorkers can thrive.

Increase funding for immigration legal services and recognize the critical role of Asian-led, Asian-serving organizations

Asian-led nonprofits serve as vital language and cultural bridges, ensuring that immigrant communities can access legal services. However, state funding for immigration legal services has been inadequate, forcing these organizations to do more with less. Meanwhile, the current federal administration has escalated anti-immigrant policies to unprecedented levels, making it even more urgent to strengthen support for immigrant communities. We urge the state to reinvest in Asian community-based organizations (CBOs) to expand access to legal services and build long-term capacity.

Key actions needed:

- **Restore the Liberty Defense Project's (LDP) original mission:** From 2017 to 2019, LDP funding enabled AAF to support 10 Asian nonprofits to provide immigration-related legal services to 8,000 clients. A shift in priorities, however, left these organizations out of the next funding round. The State must reactivate the LDP funding to help strengthen long-term immigration legal services for Asian immigrants.
- **Bridge the legal services gap:** The current federal administration has launched some of the most aggressive anti-immigrant measures in recent history.

IMMIGRATION

Now, more than ever, Asian immigrants need legal services to navigate an increasingly hostile policy environment. With limited resources, Asian nonprofits have continued to provide community education on immigration policies, case management, and legal referrals. However, these efforts cannot be sustained without a substantial increase in state investment.

- **Match services to the growing population:** The 2020 Census revealed record growth in the Asian community across New York State, particularly in upstate regions and New York City. Asian New Yorkers are 2.1 million, or almost 11%, of the state's population. Despite this, immigration legal services for Asian communities remain severely underfunded.

Investing in Asian-led nonprofits with increased funding is essential to ensuring that immigrant communities receive the legal support they need in their languages in the face of evolving challenges. Now is the time for New York State to step up and reinforce its commitment to protecting and empowering Asian immigrants.

65.3%

of the Asian American population
in NYC is foreign born

27.2%

of the Asian American population
in NYC are non-citizens

Increase funding for culturally competent safety net programs

Culturally competent safety net programs have long been vital lifelines for immigrant and low-income communities. During times of crisis, Asian-led nonprofits have stepped up, adapting food distribution methods, streamlining services, and ensuring that people can access multiple forms of assistance in a single visit. However, many still fear accessing benefits due to lingering fears from harmful policies like the previous Trump administration's changes to the public charge rule. These fears have been compounded by the increased surveillance of immigrant communities, making many reluctant to visit even food pantries out of worries that doing so could put them or their families at risk. To combat this, the City and State must fund linguistically and culturally accessible food and health programs to ensure no one is left behind.

IMMIGRATION

Key actions needed:

- **Increase funding for Asian-led, Asian-serving organizations**, such as community health centers, clinics, and food pantries, including emergency food programs that provide trusted, accessible alternatives for Asian immigrant communities hesitant to access public benefits.
- **Expand multilingual, culturally-tailored services and integrated service models** to enable community members to access comprehensive support in a single visit.
- **Strengthen partnerships with Asian-led, Asian-serving nonprofits** that understand the needs of their communities to address long-term food insecurity and healthcare gaps.

By prioritizing these investments, New York can ensure that safety net programs serve those who need them most.

Strengthen Asian community partnerships for immigrant support

The Asian community is one of the fastest-growing in New York, yet Asian immigrants are often overlooked when sharing information and resources about the ever-changing federal immigration policies. Asian-led, Asian-serving CBOs are trusted bridges connecting immigrant families to essential services and information. To ensure that Asian immigrants have access to accurate information, legal support, and critical resources, city and state policymakers must invest in and build strong partnerships with trusted community organizations.

Key actions needed:

- **Invest in Asian-led, Asian-serving CBOs to expand in-language outreach** and direct support for immigrant families navigating policy changes.
- **Foster collaboration between government agencies and community partners** to enhance trust and improve the effectiveness of immigration-related communications.
- **Leverage ethnic media as a key channel** for informing Asian immigrant communities about their rights and available services.

IMMIGRATION

- ***Develop culturally and linguistically inclusive policies*** that recognize the diversity of Asian immigrant experiences and ensure equitable access to resources.

Pass legislation reinforcing New York’s critical protections for the immigrant community and strengthening New York City as a Sanctuary City

Asian New Yorkers, like all New Yorkers, benefit when state and local government resources are dedicated to serving our communities, protecting sensitive information, and limiting unnecessary communication with federal immigration authorities. They rely on Sanctuary City policies to shield immigrants from unfair law enforcement actions, safeguard local resources, and prohibit ICE from entering sensitive locations like schools, hospitals, and shelters. Asian New Yorkers need policies that encourage immigrants to report crimes, get medical treatment, enroll in schools, and seek other city services without fear of deportation.

Key actions needed:

- ***Pass the New York for All Act (S.2235/A.3506)***, to prohibit and regulate the discovery and disclosure of immigration status in New York State
- ***Pass Int. 214, Int. 395, and Int. 396 in the New York City Council***, to protect the rights of immigrants and uphold New York City’s Sanctuary City status.

ANTI-ASIAN HATE

Vision: Through coordinated, sustainable, community-centered solutions, the Asian American community can experience a greater sense of safety and move from a state of survival to building community power.

The surge in hate and violence against the Asian community in New York continues to evolve and increase despite misconceptions that it has ceased. In New York City, between March 2020 and March 2022, more than 2,736 anti-Asian hate incidents were recorded by AAF, Stop AAPI Hate, New York City Police Department (NYPD), and the New York City Commission on Human Rights (CCHR), which represents only a fraction of total incidents due to underreporting. According to a Stop AAPI Hate study, millions of Asians nationwide were impacted by hate incidents in 2023. Half (49%) of the AAPIs surveyed specified that they experienced a hate act in 2023 due to their race, ethnicity, or nationality. Of those, 37% reported feeling like they did not receive adequate, if any, support after experiencing anti-Asian hate. The number of actual hate crimes experienced by Asian community members is drastically under-reported, as concluded by The Asian American Foundation's 2024 NYC Safety Study, which found that only 46% of Asians who experienced hate crimes ended up reporting the incidents.

Reinstate and protect funding for anti-Asian violence programs being run by Asian-led, Asian-serving organizations

Amid current federal policies that threaten Asian communities, fear among Asian New Yorkers remains high. Past anti-immigrant rhetoric has fueled violence and misinformation, normalizing hate targeting Asian Americans. Many in the community continue to self-isolate and under-report incidents due to language barriers, distrust in law enforcement, and concerns about police effectiveness. Instead, they turn to CBOs for culturally appropriate safety and victim support services

Key actions needed:

- ***Reinstate state funding for the Hope Against Hate Campaign at \$3.5 million in FY 2026 to fight against violence targeting Asian Americans and other marginalized communities.***

ANTI-ASIAN HATE

Since 2021, AAF's Hope Against Hate (HAH) Campaign's network of organizations has combated anti-Asian violence through community-driven solutions, and helped to:

Train 15,000+ New Yorkers	Serve 10,000+ youth	Provide 8,000+ victim support services
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Amid rising federal actions against immigrants, Asian New Yorkers are increasingly afraid to avail themselves of essential services. As a result, our members and partners are reporting a marked decline in the use of direct services. Sustaining HAH is crucial to maintain community safety and support.

- **Maintain or increase New York City support for AAF's Hope Against Hate Campaign, including \$400,000 in FY 2026 to support the Partners Against The Hate (PATH) programming.**

PATH funding has been vital to AAF's HAH Campaign, enhancing street safety through proven actions. Over three years, it:

Distributed 17,000+ safety resources	Trained 1,200+ in conflict de-escalation and self-defense	Mobilized 1,200+ Community Companion volunteers
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AAF's 2024 HAH report found 89% of volunteers felt better equipped to handle bias incidents, and demand for safety resources grew, underscoring the program's impact in combating anti-Asian hate.

Given the pan-Asian community's unique challenges in accessing traditional safety resources, the PATH funding has powered the HAH Campaign to become a vital, community-centered, culturally and linguistically accessible safety solution.

MENTAL HEALTH

Vision: Asian New Yorkers and other communities of color have the support to overcome historic mental health inequities through culturally competent, language-accessible services, sustained investment in CBOs, and diverse mental health professionals who reflect their communities.

Since 2017, AAF has advocated for increased linguistically and culturally competent mental health services for Asian New Yorkers. In partnership with our member organizations, our mental health programming connected over 4,800 Asian New Yorkers to mental health services from providers who speak their language and understand their unique cultural needs in 2024.

Increase investment in mental health initiatives led by and serving Asian communities and other communities of color

Culturally competent mental health services are essential for addressing the mental health crisis in communities of color. However, systemic underinvestment has left Asian-led organizations struggling to meet rising demand. Communities of color face a mental health system that was not built with them in mind—[more than 80% of psychologists in the U.S. are white](#), and therapy services are primarily available only in English. While 58% of White New Yorkers experiencing depression receive mental health treatment, only 38% of AAPI, 39% of Latino, and 30% of Black New Yorkers [receive the support they need](#).

These gaps have worsened due to the COVID-19 pandemic, rising anti-Asian hate, and ongoing anti-immigrant policies, all of which have exacerbated mental health challenges in the Asian community. AAF’s own 2023 report [Seeking Help, Finding Hope](#) reveals major barriers to the access of mental health services include:

Lack of information or misinformation

34% of survey respondents chose this as a barrier

Language barrier

33% of survey respondents chose this as a barrier

Cultural barrier

29% of survey respondents chose this as a barrier

Now more than ever, New York State must invest in culturally and linguistically inclusive mental health services to ensure all communities have access to care.

MENTAL HEALTH

Key actions needed:

- **Earmark \$10 million in the FY 2026 New York State Budget for the Communities of Color Mental Health Initiative.** This initiative, led by the Investing in Mental Health Programs to Advance Cultural Treatment (IMPACT) Coalition, would provide historic investment to prioritize and support the unique mental health needs of communities of color.
- **Build a pipeline of mental health professionals of color** who speak the languages and understand the cultural and historical experiences of AAPI, Black, and Latino communities.
- **Launch a statewide public education campaign** to reduce mental health stigma and share accessible online and in-person mental health resources.
- **Expand a network of trusted Asian-led, Asian-serving CBOs** that provide culturally and linguistically competent clinical and non-clinical mental health services.
- **Increase capacity in downstate and key metropolitan upstate regions** to address the mental health needs of both long-standing and newcomer communities.

AAF urges New York State to include significant funding for the IMPACT Coalition in the FY 2026 budget.

Increase funding for NYC’s Immigrant Health Initiative and Mental Health for Vulnerable Populations Initiative

Asian-led nonprofits have been at the forefront of providing critical mental health services, yet funding has not kept pace with growing demand. In FY 2025, only AAF and eight of its member organizations received funding from the Immigrant Health Initiative, Mental Health for Vulnerable Populations Initiative, or the Geriatric Mental Health Initiative. Despite continued underinvestment, Asian-led organizations remain dedicated to providing high-quality, culturally competent mental health care, even as demand far outstrips capacity.

AAF’s 2024 report, *Seeking Help, Finding Hope* found that despite nearly 80% of respondents experiencing symptoms typically associated with mental distress, only 45% of those individuals recognized that they needed to seek mental health support.

MENTAL HEALTH

These programs have a profound impact on the well-being of our communities. An astonishing 96% of respondents in AAF's program evaluation survey reported feeling more capable of managing their emotional well-being as a result of the mental health services provided by our partners. However, without increased funding, Asian-led organizations will struggle to retain bilingual staff, expand case management services, and sustain critical mental health programs.

Key actions needed:

- **Expand funding for Asian-led, Asian-serving CBOs** to provide culturally-competent mental health services tailored to the needs of immigrant and marginalized communities.
- **Support not just bilingual mental health staff recruitment**, but also retention to ensure culturally competent care.
- **Strengthen case management services** to meet the increasing demand for mental health support.
- **Invest in both clinical and non-clinical mental health initiatives** to reduce stigma and increase access to culturally appropriate mental health care.

By prioritizing these investments, New York can ensure that all communities—regardless of language, background, or immigration status—have access to the mental health support they need to thrive.

NONPROFIT SUPPORT

Vision: Asian CBOs are resourced and invested in by New York City and State to adequately serve and address the growing needs of Asian New Yorkers.

AAF proudly represents and collaborates with over 70 Asian-led, Asian-serving member and partner organizations to serve the 2.1 million Asian residents across New York State. Our members and partners provide direct services, community programming, and resource navigation in our communities' diverse languages and cultures, filling crucial gaps left by government agencies.

These organizations, which range from large social services agencies to smaller grassroots organizations, do vital work to support the community. Due to historic underinvestment by the City and State, their work deserves deeper investment and increased opportunities to achieve their full potential and growth. For example, the median total allocation from FY 2025 City Council Initiatives was only \$320,000 for forty-seven member organizations, barely enough to maintain operations. Policymakers must invest in long-term capacity-building initiatives for our community organizations that serve the fastest-growing community, yet one of the poorest communities, in the city and state.

Increase State investment in Asian-led, Asian-serving CBOs

To meet the growing needs of New York's 2.1 million Asian residents, increased investment in Asian-led, Asian-serving CBOs is essential to increasing their capacity to provide critical social services.

Key actions needed:

- **Invest \$54.35 million in the FY 2026 State Budget to support the AAPI Equity Budget Coalition**, enabling over 130 organizations across New York State to deliver essential services in social support, mental health, safety, and education.
- **Expand funding to match rapid population growth**, particularly in upstate regions and Long Island, where Asian communities have seen significant increases—more than 30% in Rochester and 140% in Buffalo.

NONPROFIT SUPPORT

Increase City Council initiative funding aimed at supporting Asian direct service providers

Many Asian-led CBO's rely on discretionary support to sustain in-language, culturally competent services vital to immigrant communities. In FY 2025, AAF and its members received funding from over 40 City Council initiatives, allowing them to meet diverse community needs. Through AAF's Nonprofit Support Program, we trained 157 staff members from over 60 organizations serving communities of color in advocacy and communications skills so they can better address the urgent service needs of their communities. During a time when immigrant communities no longer feel protected by the current federal administration, it is more important than ever for the City to make critical investments to fill in gaps and alleviate immigrants' fears and concerns about accessing essential services and support.

Key action needed:

- ***Maintain the City's Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund (CCNSF) at the FY 2025 level of \$3.7 million***, sustaining vital organizational capacity-building for CBOs led by and serving communities of color.

The City Council must continue to support this critical funding in FY 2026 to build up nonprofit staff capacity and ensure the long-term sustainability of our organizations.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Vision: Asian and immigrant small businesses are valued as critical economic anchors through meaningful engagement, policy change, and equitable access to funds and other resources.

While immigrant small businesses contribute substantially to our state and city's economies, they were notably left out of most pandemic recovery efforts. To date, they face new and ongoing challenges that make operating their businesses more difficult, from bureaucratic obstacles to changes in federal immigration policy that increase hostility to the immigrant community and small businesses. To bridge the gap in outreach and engagement, AAF has provided critical capacity-building and technical assistance services to help small businesses navigate various challenges, including bureaucratic hurdles, inconsistent regulatory enforcement, and persistent language and system inaccessibility. These high-demand services must be supported alongside coinciding policy reforms that put our immigrant small businesses first.

Support programming and policies that recognize and prioritize the needs of Asian small businesses

Support CBOs that offer in-language technical assistance to immigrant small businesses to enhance their digital literacy. Many immigrant business owners struggle to navigate online governmental platforms, which deepens the digital divide and hinders their ability to connect with city and state agencies. Establishing an online presence is crucial for their survival, yet many struggle due to a lack of meaningful, in-language support. CBOs need sufficient resources to effectively assist immigrant-owned businesses in meeting these challenges.

Further, to ensure inclusive and equitable economic recovery, prioritize partnerships with trusted CBOs with a track record in place-based development efforts. Placemaking programs like NYC Small Business Services' Avenue NYC program have benefited immigrant communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, and the City Council should prioritize funding CBOs in commercial corridor revitalization efforts.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Key actions needed:

- **Support programming that provides technical assistance to immigrant small businesses** to increase digital literacy for limited-English-proficient (LEP) immigrant business owners.
- **Expand funding for place-based projects** to support immigrant commercial corridors.

Fund trusted CBOs with expertise to lead outreach efforts on predatory business practices

CBOs are best positioned to protect small businesses from predatory practices by offering programming, providing training and technical support, to strengthen the relationship between the businesses and communities. With funding from the City, CBOs can conduct educational outreach about topics such as commercial lease tenants' rights and raise awareness of unfair and predatory leasing practices. For example, AAF has learned from immigrant small businesses that demanding "key money" to secure a lease and a "key" to the property is a predatory practice.

Key actions needed:

- **Move away from using ZIP codes as LMI determination for small business grant eligibility.**

Using ZIP codes to determine low-to-moderate income (LMI) eligibility for small business grants overlooks how these areas often include both high and low-income communities. For instance, Chinatown businesses in zip code 10013, shared with SoHo and Tribeca, were left out of the City's aid programs during economic downturns. AAF applauds the NYC Department of Small Business Services' implementation of the NYC Small Business Resilience Grant, for using census tracts instead, and urges the City to adopt this more granular standard in future programs.

- **Pass [Int 1082](#) requiring the Department of Small Business Services to conduct a formal study of the fees and costs needed to start and maintain a small business.**

Rising prices and fees have strained small businesses. This study's findings

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

will be published online, with a report to the Mayor and the Speaker of the Council recommending ways to reduce these burdens on small businesses.

- **Pass [Int 449](#) to amend the City of New York's administrative code, to create a commercial landlord watch list.**

Brick-and-mortar small business owners frequently cite rising rent and conflicts with landlords as some of their most pressing challenges. This measure has the potential to provide much-needed transparency and accountability, and keep business owners informed of their rights and protections.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Vision: Asian New Yorkers, especially first-time and LEP voters, are equipped with the civic education they need to feel empowered to show up at the polls and vote confidently and in their interest.

In 2020, AAF launched the AAPI Power Coalition to enhance voter education and turnout among hard-to-reach Asian communities. Made up of 12 organizations, the Coalition focuses on vital areas of New York City, providing funding, training, and resources for voter mobilization. In 2023, it reached 255,390 voters through culturally sensitive outreach and language-accessible efforts. Additionally, our [2022 Civic Engagement Report](#) found that our activities increased voter turnout by a statistically significant eleven percentage points. These findings highlight the urgent need for elected leaders to support data-driven civic engagement work, especially among Asian Americans. As New York State and City's fastest growing population, Asian Americans need barrier-free, data-driven civic engagement that respects culture and language. We remain committed to this work.

Invest in data-driven civic engagement programming that prioritizes the needs of Asian New Yorkers

New York State is among 40 states that do not collect race or ethnicity data during voter registration. As a result, political campaigns and outreach efforts rely on commercial databases for voter race and ethnicity data. These databases often misrepresent Asian voters, due to limited algorithms based on a narrow set of surnames and English naming conventions. This undercounting has led to Asian voters being inadequately engaged, contributing to the defeat of more than one candidate. A notable instance is our [case study](#) from the 2022 general election in New York City's Assembly District 49, where stronger outreach could have influenced the final result.

Key action needed:

- **Support legislation that requires disaggregated data for Asian American voters** so our communities are more accurately represented.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Invest in Civic Education tools and relationship-focused practices so Asian New Yorkers can be informed and engaged voters

Asian-serving organizations have worked diligently over the last decade to boost Asian voter turnout, tailoring outreach to diverse languages, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds. AAF continues to explore new methods to strengthen civic engagement:

Ballot Builder: Asian New Yorkers, particularly limited English proficient voters, struggle to understand candidates' positions and government responsibilities due to language barriers. AAF's [Ballot Builder](#), a voter education tool launched for the 2024 presidential election, provides essential voting information in eight Asian languages: Arabic, Bangla, Simplified and Traditional Chinese, Korean, Punjabi, Tagalog, and Urdu. AAF will update the platform for the 2026 NYC mayoral and state gubernatorial elections.

Relational Texting: AAF leverages mobile technology and relational texting to drive authentic, large-scale voter engagement, fostering meaningful connections beyond cold calls or mass emails.

Community Building, Engagement, and Education: AAF's civic education program focuses on building long-term relationships to ensure the Asian community can access electoral information well before an election. By addressing barriers through intentional engagement and community programming, we aim to empower disenfranchised Asian New Yorkers and foster sustained civic participation.

Key action needed:

- *Invest in and implement initiatives to increase electoral literacy* for Asian American voters.

Between 2013 and 2020,
New York City's Asian voting-age citizens
grew from 581,490 to 694,940—
a 19.5% increase
—that outpaced all other major racial groups

SENIORS/OLDER ADULTS

Vision: Asian American older adults in New York City and New York State have the resources and support they need to age with dignity and peace.

Asian older adults are the fastest-growing senior community in NYC, making up 14% of the City's senior population. In fact:

- The number of Asian seniors in New York increased by 68% from 2012 to 2022, and a rise in poverty accompanied this growth.
- Currently, 42% of Asian older adults are low-income, making them among the city's poorest seniors.
- 25% of Asian seniors in poverty live alone.
- 84% of Asian older adults are Limited English Proficient (LEP).

In response to these growing needs, AAF launched the Asian Seniors Working Group (SWG) in 2021, which includes 12 member organizations serving 125,000 low-income seniors annually. The SWG advocates for resources and in 2022, released a [Policy Agenda](#) highlighting anti-Asian violence, access to essential services, mental health, and social isolation.

For example, food insecurity is a significant concern, worsened by federal funding cuts and fears of anti-immigrant and anti-Asian violence. The SWG's culturally competent meal programs provide essential support, fostering social connection and access to vital services. To protect vulnerable seniors, SWG urges systemic changes prioritizing cultural competency and language access in city programs.

Support policies and legislation that protect the service needs of Asian seniors, the fastest-growing and poorest older adult population in New York

In New York State, [A3489](#) would authorize emergency assistance and funds to be disbursed to needy families with children, safety net assistance, SNAP benefits, or emergency assistance for aged, blind, and disabled persons in instances of fraud or theft of benefits. Additionally, [A574](#), would update EBT cards from a magnetic strip to use chip technology. For many Asian Seniors, the aid and benefits they receive from the state are vital to their survival, and emergency assistance and technology updates to protect against the risk of fraud bolster their safety net.

SENIORS/OLDER ADULTS

Key actions needed:

- Pass [A3489](#) to authorize the reissuance of emergency assistance in fraud or theft of benefits.
- Pass [S1779/A5742](#), to create and implement a program to update all EBT cards from magnetic strips to chip technology cards.

LANGUAGE ACCESS

Vision: Asian immigrants are valued as essential community members, empowered with accurate, timely, and in-language information to access vital programs, resources, and opportunities for success.

With two-thirds of Asian New Yorkers being immigrants, and nearly 30% arriving in or after 2010, language access is essential to ensuring economic, civic, and social progress for the community. Asian New Yorkers face some of the highest language barriers in the state, with nearly 40% of Asians statewide and almost 50% in New York City having LEP – far exceeding the general population. Among older Asian adults, almost 70% have limited English proficiency. Without adequate language access, these barriers can limit job opportunities, civic engagement, and access to essential services. AAF champions language access to support economic opportunity and social inclusion.

Prioritize and invest in language access policies and programs to ensure Asian New Yorkers have access to resources and opportunities when language justice is being threatened at the federal level

As New York’s Asian communities continue to grow, the State must act to remove language barriers and ensure that all residents can access the services they need.

Key actions needed:

- **Pass the NYS Language Access Expansion Act ([S.5535/A.4875](#)) to:**
 1. Expand free interpretation and translation services in state and county public-facing agencies;
 2. Require translation in the top three non-English languages in each regional area; and
 3. Increase the number of languages covered under the state’s language access policy.
- **Prioritize language access for immigrants newly arrived in the last five years,** who often face the most significant barriers.
- **Mandate biennial evaluations of language needs** based on Census and American Community Survey data.

LANGUAGE ACCESS

- **Ensure regional flexibility** so language services align with the needs of local communities.
- **Improve coordination and enforcement of existing language access laws in NYS** and agency compliance with the Governor’s executive orders to guarantee equitable access to services for all New Yorkers.

As New York’s immigrant communities grow, continued investment in language access is essential to providing economic empowerment, equity, and inclusion for all.

Sustain City funding for the Language Justice Collaborative and AAF’s Asian Language Worker Cooperative by renewing the \$700,000 allocation in FY 2026

Language justice ensures that all New Yorkers can fully participate in society. As part of the Language Justice Collaborative, AAF partners with groups like African Communities Together and the New York Immigration Coalition to expand language access. In FY 2025, the City Council allocated \$3.8 million, including \$700,000 for AAF’s Asian Language Worker Cooperative, which professionalizes interpretation services. To sustain this vital work, AAF requests the City to continue the investment in FY 2026 to support AAF’s efforts to expand language access, train interpreters, and empower immigrant workers through cooperatives.

Key actions needed:

- **Bridge critical service gaps in courts, healthcare, education, and social services** by strengthening partnerships between government agencies and community-based language cooperatives.
- **Ensure long-term investment in language access** for Asian immigrant communities by expanding funding for immigrant-led language cooperatives beyond FY 2026.



Asian American Federation

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