



ASIAN AMERICAN FEDERATION

2025 ASIAN AMERICAN NYC MAYORAL PRIORITIES



In November 2025, Asian New Yorkers from across the five boroughs will cast votes to determine who will be the next mayor of New York City (NYC). With a population of over 1.5 million, Asian New Yorkers have the unique opportunity to demonstrate the power of our voices through civic engagement and naming the priorities that matter most to our communities.

The Asian American Federation (AAF), through our deep work with our over 70 member organizations, has long understood the importance and power of Asian New Yorkers' voices. For over 35 years, we have uplifted the day-to-day needs of our communities and challenged the model minority stereotype, which inaccurately creates an incomplete image of the Asian American community as homogenous, exclusively successful and wealthy. We know instead that our communities have critical, often overlooked needs, including mental health, anti-Asian hate, public safety, immigration, support for older adults, language access, and economic empowerment. These priorities are backed up by our [research](#), including in our recently released [New York City Council brief](#) where we explored trends for Asian New Yorkers, including high poverty rates, the need for language access, and significant population growth around the city.

Our 2025 Asian American mayoral priorities reflect New York City's need for substantial, sustained investment in Asian American communities and increased collaboration between community-based organizations (CBOs). Our next mayor must invest in the Asian American community's priorities to effectively lead all New Yorkers.



MENTAL HEALTH

➔ **The mayor must invest in mental health initiatives for Asian New Yorkers and other marginalized groups who have low to no access to mental health services.**

- Culturally-competent mental health services are essential for addressing the growing mental health crisis in communities of color. However, systemic underinvestment has left Asian-led organizations struggling to meet rising demand for care.
- Gaps in service have worsened due to the COVID-19 pandemic, rising anti-Asian hate, ongoing cultural stigma, and recent anti-immigrant policies, all of which have exacerbated mental health challenges in the Asian community.

Recommendations:

- Expand funding for Asian-led, Asian-serving CBOs to provide culturally-competent mental health services tailored to the needs of immigrant and marginalized communities.
- Invest in clinical and non-clinical mental health initiatives to reduce stigma and increase access to culturally-appropriate mental health care.
- Support language-accessible services and strengthen case management services so that more Asian New Yorkers can access the care they need.

ANTI-ASIAN HATE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

➔ **The mayor must invest in community-led safety initiatives that increase safety for Asian New Yorkers through multi-sector collaboration and victim-centered services.**

- In 2021, during an unprecedented time of hate violence against Asian Americans, the Mayor's Office for the Prevention of Hate Crimes launched the Partners Against the Hate (PATH) Forward Initiative, which aimed to tackle bias-motivated incidents and hate crimes in NYC. While funding through this initiative has been critical for CBOs across the city to address the unique needs of victims and community members seeking safety, it has recently been marked for significant budget cuts. As this funding supported access to all forms of public safety through government systems and community-based approaches, a vital tool for the well-being of our city has been threatened.

Recommendations:

- Reinforce the PATH Forward Initiative through increased funding. Since 2021, AAF's Hope Against Hate Campaign has addressed bias-motivated incidents and hate crimes in NYC. The mayor must sustain the PATH Forward initiative, managed by the Office for the Prevention of Hate Crimes, with consistent funding for nonprofit partner organizations and by upholding current programming requirements.
- Recognize community expertise and community-centered strategies through partnership with CBOs that understand the racial, religious, cultural, and linguistic specific approaches to stop hate violence and increase safety for all New Yorkers.

IMMIGRATION

The mayor must commit to protecting New York City's immigrant community and consider the unique needs of the Asian community.

- Asian New Yorkers are overwhelmingly immigrants with 65% of Asians in NYC being foreign-born and 27.2% being non-citizens. New anti-immigrant policies on the federal level and dangerous rhetoric about immigrants threaten community safety, dignity, and opportunities for families to thrive in NYC. As our community faces unprecedented challenges and dramatic federal funding cuts that undercut critical safety nets, NYC must provide ongoing and dedicated support through legal protections, resources, and community investment.

Recommendations:

- Support City Council Initiatives [214](#), [395](#), and [396](#) to protect immigrants' rights and uphold NYC's status as a city that welcomes and protects immigrants. All New Yorkers should be able to safely access sensitive locations like schools, hospitals, and shelters.
- Fortify funding for culturally-competent safety net programs, in addition to food and health programs, to ensure no one is left behind in light of federal government spending cuts. The mayor's administration and City Council must work together to streamline the contracting and procurement process so that organizations receive funding promptly to deliver crucial services.
- Invest in immigrant rapid response networks to connect immigrants and their families with critical legal services, case management, and accurate resources to address a rise in misinformation, isolation, and fear.

OLDER ADULTS

➔ The mayor must invest in improving the quality of life and community resources for older Asian adults.

- Asian older adults are the fastest-growing older adult community citywide, making up 14% of NYC's senior population. This population growth was coupled with a rise in poverty, and currently, 42% of Asian seniors are low-income, making them among the City's poorest seniors. 25% of Asian seniors experiencing poverty live alone, and 84% have limited English proficiency (LEP).
- The older adult population in NYC is projected to grow to 25% by 2040. Yet, the Department for the Aging receives less than 1% of the city's budget. Many older Asian adults experience food insecurity, poverty, and limited access to culturally-responsive care.

➔ Recommendations:

- Increase funding for linguistically and culturally-competent food service programs that are working overtime to alleviate food insecurity for Asian older adults, especially in light of recent federal funding cuts to food programs.
- Bolster funding to Asian-led, Asian-serving older adult service providers that deliver critical social services such as case management, digital literacy, and other programming to combat isolation and promote wellness.
- Expand funding to include culturally-competent, in-language, and older-adult-focused nontraditional mental health service models. Prioritize CBOs with a history of delivering free or subsidized nontraditional, culturally-competent services.

LANGUAGE ACCESS

➔ The mayor must support investment in language interpretation and translation so that Asian New Yorkers can access the full range of services the City offers.

- As of the 2020 Census, the total population of Asian language speakers in NYC was 907,082, and 59% were considered limited English proficient. A lack of access to in-language materials prevents our community members from getting the critical information and services they need, whether that means access to SNAP benefits, hospitals, emergency services, or social services.



Recommendations:

- Fully restore \$3.8 million in the city budget for the interpreter bank and language services worker cooperatives launched by the Language Justice Collaborative. This would allow AAF to continue building its Asian language worker cooperative that creates a trained workforce of interpreters to provide language access services.
- Strengthen partnerships between government agencies and CBOs that provide language translation and interpretation services in order to bridge critical service gaps in courts, health care, education, and social services.
- Ensure that city agencies comply with Local Law 30, which aims to improve access to information and city services for all New Yorkers, by addressing noncompliance and resourcing agencies to adequately staff and provide resources to implement robust language access plans.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT



The mayor must invest in supporting small businesses so New York can be a center of economic opportunity for small businesses, workers, and thriving Asian American communities.

- An equitable economic future for NYC depends on promoting immigrant small businesses. Immigrant-owned small businesses are vital pillars of NYC's neighborhoods, yet Asian entrepreneurs continue to face systemic barriers such as bureaucratic requirements and rising costs that limit their success. Trusted CBOs are best positioned to close these gaps by delivering culturally-competent services and the tools needed to compete in the online marketplace. Through targeted investments in culturally competent technical assistance and commercial corridor revitalization, the next mayor can ensure that Asian-owned businesses are recognized not just as economic contributors, but as key stakeholders in the city's shared prosperity.



Recommendations:

- Fund trusted CBOs with expertise to lead outreach efforts and help small businesses navigate challenges associated with a lack of access to in-language materials and system inaccessibility, including accessing online government services, applying for relief programs, and maintaining compliance.
- Support [City Council Int 1082](#), which requires the Department of Small Business Services to conduct a formal study of the fees and costs needed to start and maintain a small business.

- Support [City Council Int 449](#), which amends the City of New York’s administrative code to create a commercial landlord watch list. Small business owners frequently cite rising rent and landlord disputes as their most pressing challenges, and this measure has the potential to provide much-needed transparency and accountability in the commercial rent market.

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