

CHINESE-AMERICAN PLANNING COUNCIL



# Advocacy Advisory Council (AAC) Report 2023

January 2023 - September 2023



**POLICY & PUBLIC AFFAIRS TEAM**

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# Letter from the Civic Engagement & Training Manager

At the Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC), we believe that providing high-quality social services and advocating for policies that uplift New York's immigrant and marginalized communities go hand in hand. In 2021, we started the Advocacy Advisory Council (AAC), a leadership development program, to train staff to be confident advocates for their programs and the communities they serve. I was a member of the first cohort in my first role as an Adult Literacy instructor, and I was so inspired by the experience that I joined our Policy Team full time!

In 2022-2023, we welcomed the second cohort of the AAC with five new members, rounding out a diverse group of staff who made this year's budget and legislative wins possible. This report is a celebration of their incredible accomplishments.

I want to thank Policy Team members Frances Huang, Carlyn Cowen, Edwin Tablada, and Ashley Chen, as well as our guest speakers, Olivia Lapeyrolerie and Miriam Yeung, for their invaluable contributions to this cycle. Thank you also to The Asian American Foundation for making this work possible with their generous funding.

I am so grateful for our staff's continued dedication to uplifting our community and excited for the change we will make together in the future.



*Caroline Scown*

Caroline Scown

# Letter from the Advocacy Manager

The Advocacy Advisory Council (AAC) has been a goal of CPC's Policy & Public Affairs team for more than 4 years. When I first joined our Policy & Public Affairs team in 2019, the team was engaged in mostly policy analysis and building governmental relationships within New York City and New York State. We were interested in connecting CPC's social services work to systemic change, and empowering the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities we work with to engage in the social change processes.

We operate from the belief that everyone is the expert of their own experiences, and therefore one of the main goals of our advocacy includes elevating the stories of our frontline workers and directly connecting their stories to policy and systemic issues. The AAC was created to continue involving CPC staff in deeper community organizing and civic engagement, as well as to further develop their advocacy and leadership skills.

Over the past 2 years, the AAC has grown significantly, due to the members' dedication to the AAC's programming and purpose. I am deeply grateful to have started this program and seen through its first year, and I am proud to see an alumna of the program leading it today.



*Frances Huang*

Frances Huang

# The Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC)

Founded in 1965, the Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC) is a social services organization that promotes the social and economic empowerment of Chinese American, immigrant, and low-income communities. Today, CPC is the nation's largest Asian American social services organization and provides education, family, community, and career services to 80,000 individuals and families from across New York City.



# The Advocacy Advisory Council (AAC)

The Advocacy Advisory Council (AAC) is a group of dedicated, frontline staff at CPC, who are committed to empowering their community members and colleagues through advocacy. Throughout their term, members expand CPC's advocacy and organizing power, gain crucial skills that allow them to be strong and effective advocates, and go on to lead program- and issue-specific advocacy campaigns.

Members on the AAC are selected through an application process and can stay in the program for a total of three years. All members receive a \$2,500 yearly stipend for their work on the council.

# AAC 2022-2023 Cohort



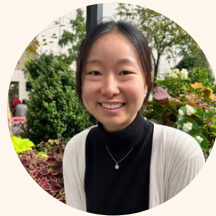
**Anna Chen**  
Intake/Outreach  
Coordinator



**Cindy Chen**  
Family Support  
Coordinator



**Shuping Deng**  
Office for New Americans  
Program Supervisor



**Karyee Khor**  
Case Planner



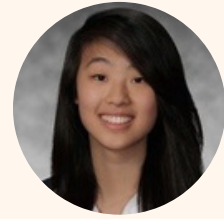
**Jeff Lau**  
Adult Literacy  
Director



**Tommy Lee**  
Office for New Americans  
Program Supervisor



**Nicholas Lombardo**  
Youth Education  
Specialist



**Benice Mach**  
Mobility LABS  
Coordinator



**Kaitlyn Mar**  
Individual Giving Coordinator



**Chenbaixue Yang**  
Case Planner

# AAC Accomplishments

The accomplishments of these AAC members include but are not limited to:

- Helped win **\$30 million investment in AAPI communities** through New York State's AAPI Equity Budget
- Mobilized staff for the years-long Just Pay campaign to help win a **9.27% pay increase over three years for city-contracted workers** in a historic **\$741 million investment in the human services workforce** in 2024
- Collaborated with the Caring Majority, a coalition consisting of home care workers and clients, to get New York State to **increase home care worker wages from \$15.00/hour to \$18.55/hour**
- Helped secure **\$1,305,969 in City Council discretionary funding for CPC**, a \$385,000 increase
- Fought for **\$16 million funding for free childcare for undocumented families** through PromiseNYC
- **Mobilized over 600 CPC staff and community members** to attend Advocacy Days
- **Led 44 legislative and budgetary meetings** with federal, New York State, and New York City elected officials to advocate for investment in our immigrant communities
- **Testified at New York State and New York City budget, oversight, and legislative hearings**
- Attended, mobilized participants, and gave remarks at **26 coalition partner actions**
- **Attended 12 hours of advocacy trainings**
- Participated in national, New York State, and New York City-wide **professional development opportunities**, including Caucus Weekend, SOMOS Albany, Netroots Nation, and APIA Vote Convening

# Advocacy Days

CPC holds annual advocacy days on the State and City level in which community members and staff travel to Albany and City Hall, virtually during the pandemic, to speak with elected officials about the issues facing our communities. We meet with over 200 elected officials every year to discuss our priorities and demand that an equitable budget is passed in April on the State level and in June on the City level.

In addition to our legislative meetings, we hold an annual rally calling on respective elected officials on the city and state level to ensure that their actions are truly reflective of the needs of the most vulnerable communities. During these rallies, we have elected officials, staff, and community members speak about the importance of fully funding human services and the need to expand and fund programs that address the needs of our communities.

Our advocacy days have grown in scale over the years and it has only been made possible with the support of AAC members. AAC members coordinated transportation, executed rallies, and led on legislative meetings.



*At CPC's 5th Annual State Advocacy Days in Albany aFebruary 27th, AAC members mobilized 125 staff and community members to call for a budget that invests in immigrant communities.*



*AAC members turned out over 500 rally attendees at CPC's 6th Annual City Advocacy Day at Foley Square to demand that the City pass an equitable budget.*



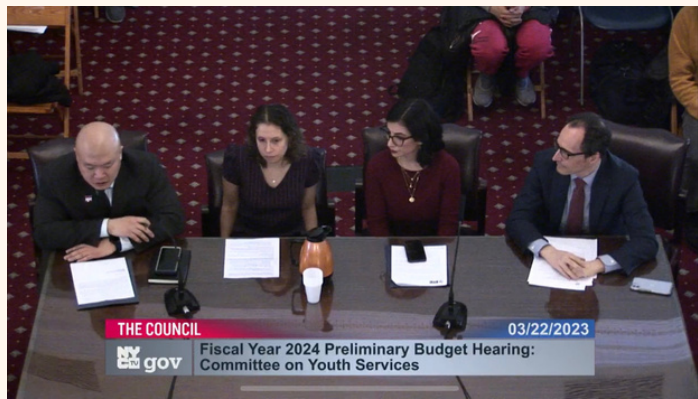
# Featured Stories

“I always doubted whether I was qualified to be advocating and speaking with elected officials. However, during my time at the AAC, I have been able to gain hard and soft skills that have made me become an effective and confident advocate. I have assisted community members with Excluded Workers Fund applications, and been able to join in on efforts for a permanent solution (Unemployment Bridge Program). It has been so exciting and the coalition has really found joy in the movement which is so refreshing.”

- Anna Chen



Anna Chen and other AAC members at a march across the Manhattan Bridge demanding that a permanent insurance fund be established for excluded workers.



Jeff Lau at the City Council Preliminary Budget Hearing discussing the need to fully fund adult literacy programs and social service agencies.

“The Advocacy Advisory Council has been an incredible experience that has taught front-line program workers like myself how to better advocate for the communities we serve. It has brought what once felt like difficult-to-reach tasks into something more meaningful and tangible including engaging elected officials, holding rallies, speaking to reporters, and building campaigns. The skills learned at the AAC are empowering and career-long. I personally utilize these skills as I engage my leadership, our funders, and elected officials. This is demonstrated when I testify at hearings to advocate for more funding for our programs, increase wages for my staff, and addressing the needs of our communities.”

- Jeff Lau

# Featured Stories

“I am incredibly grateful for the opportunities that the Advocacy Advisory Council has provided me to engage in core advocacy work and for the support I have had developing skills that I will use in my current and future work.

Over the past year, I learned about many of the key policy matters that CPC supports. I was supported through and succeeded in speaking before large and small crowds and submitting oral testimony before the New York City Council on behalf of my program. I trained staff and facilitated meetings with city and state legislators. Helping represent CPC, I spoke and organized alongside the Riders Alliance, a coalition advocating for improved public transit and fair fares, and observed how a campaign changes throughout an advocacy season.

These experiences and more have empowered me to inform, train, and support my own students getting involved in these meetings and actions and feeling able to make tangible change in the city and in the state. I am excited to step into organizing students and staff to continue supporting CPC’s key policy issues, including being more involved in planning actions with Riders Alliance, and joining a new coalition and building momentum for environmental justice for our communities in the coming year.”

- **Nicholas Lombardo**



*Nicholas Lombardo speaking at a Riders Alliance rally demanding the expansion of Fair Fares that would allow half priced metro card fares for low-income New Yorkers.*