

April 17, 2024

Senator Bobby Joe Champion  
Chair, Senate Jobs and Economic Development Committee  
3401 Minnesota Senate Bldg.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Champion and Members of the Senate Jobs and Economic Development Committee:

The Coalition of Asian American Leaders (CAAL) writes in strong support of the Senate Jobs and Economic Development Omnibus Bill (SF5289), which includes funds to support Asian women entrepreneurs throughout the state.

Asian women entrepreneurs are living and working across Minnesota. As one of the fastest growing demographics of business owners, Asian women run grocery stores, bakeries, and organic food distribution programs. They own home healthcare businesses, laundromats, and beauty salons. Their businesses and services are meeting a wide variety of community needs and are a backbone for many local economies. Unfortunately, specific barriers stand in the way of the ability of Asian women entrepreneurs to develop and grow these businesses. These include language barriers, a lack of relationships with banking institutions, a lack of familiarity with government programs supporting businesses, and discrimination and negative stereotypes.

**Targeted investment in Asian women entrepreneurs, through a trusted community network, is needed to overcome these barriers and will benefit the state as a whole.** SF 5289 provides a one-time appropriation through CAAL, a trusted nonprofit organization with a strong community network and proven track record of supporting Asian Minnesotan women entrepreneurs and business owners. This appropriation will provide business owners with technical assistance to navigate assistance programs and build relationships with financial institutions. It will also offer direct financial support and support the development of a peer network of Asian women entrepreneurs.

**When we equip Asian women entrepreneurs with the tools to turn their ideas into businesses, we begin building intergenerational wealth for the Asian Minnesotan community.** We create pathways out of low-wage work for Asian American families, and our children have better educational and career outcomes because of it. We boost the economic stability of the Asian Minnesotan community – and Minnesota overall.

Thank you to Chair Champion for the inclusion of these funds in the Jobs and Economic Development Omnibus bill, and thank you to Senator Hawj for authoring the original legislation.

Please support the Jobs and Economic Development Omnibus legislation and its essential investments in Minnesota communities.

Sincerely,

ThaoMee Xiong  
Executive and Network Director  
Coalition of Asian American Leaders