



## Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

JB Pritzker, Governor

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Illinois Celebrates Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month**

*May officially proclaimed AAPI Heritage Month; DCEO to host several events to support AAPI community with business resources*

**CHICAGO** - The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) today launched its Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month celebrations with a [proclamation](#) recognizing AAPI Heritage Month, spotlights on AAPI-owned businesses and hosting a series of events for business owners throughout May 2022. Additional information about resources and events can be found [here](#).

“During Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month, DCEO is honoring the critical role that AAPI-owned businesses play in Illinois’ economy,” **said Director of DCEO, Sylvia I. Garcia**. “We are committed to creating an inclusive business ecosystem in Illinois, helping to deliver DCEO resources to communities who have traditionally faced systemic barriers to accessing assistance and capital. During AAPI month and throughout the year, we remain steadfast in our partnership with AAPI business owners and AAPI communities across Illinois to increase access to economic opportunity.”

“As the first Asian American elected to the General Assembly, I encourage Illinoisans to celebrate National Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month by honoring the cultural and economic contributions from the AAPI community,” **said State Rep. Theresa Mah (D-Chicago)**. “We will continue to share our message to eliminate anti-Asian sentiment and racism that has been spread throughout the community during the pandemic, while we work with stakeholders statewide to bolster programs and initiatives that support the AAPI community.”

Throughout AAPI Heritage Month, DCEO is honoring the AAPI community and the 99,000 AAPI businesses that represent 17 percent of all Illinois businesses. Since the onset of the pandemic, AAPI-owned businesses have seen a rise in anti-AAPI sentiments and have suffered losses, with the impact of a rise in anti-Asian hate crimes reverberating through the community. DCEO is committed to creating an equitable and inclusive business environment through significant investments in equity-based programs, outreach, and funding opportunities.

“As an AAPI business owner and restauranter, I’m grateful that DCEO provides access to funding resources and opportunities for small business owners such as myself,” **said Bala Ghimire, owner of**

**Chicago restaurants Nepal House and Curry House.** “DCEO’s resources have been extremely helpful for small businesses to help them navigate the post-pandemic world.”

“AAPI month provides an opportunity to uplift our voices and recognize the integral role of the AAPI community in Illinois. We will continue to collaborate with our partners, like DCEO, throughout the year, whether it be on business relief or support for small businesses, and delivery of technical assistance,” **said Grace Chan McKibben, Executive Director of the Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community (CBCAC).**

“AAPI Month is about celebrating the community, but it’s also about a renewed focus on Illinois’ commitment to equity through initiatives such as the Teaching Equitable Asian American Community History (TEAACH) Act and the formation of the Asian American and South Asian American Chambers of Commerce,” **said State Sen. Ram Villivalam (D-Chicago).** “Illinois is setting the pace, being the first in the nation to take positive steps illustrating the contributions of AAPI Illinoisans while focusing efforts to reduce anti-Asian hate crimes and eliminate barriers that small businesses in our communities may face.”

### **DCEO AAPI Heritage Month Events:**

DCEO’s Offices of Minority Economic Empowerment (OMEE) and Regional Economic Development (RED), alongside community and civic groups curated the following virtual events featuring business resources, highlighting the AAPI community’s resilience, and recognizing AAPI businesses and their contributions to Illinois. Participants can learn more and register for events on DCEO’s [AAPI Heritage Month page](#):

**Event Name:** Illinois Changemakers Creating Companies: A Conversation with Health Tech Entrepreneur Sona Shah, CEO & Co-founder of Neopenda

**Event Date/Time:** Thursday, May 19, 8:00 p.m.

**Event Location:** Virtual

**Description:** Learn more about Sona’s entrepreneurial journey and her ideas for how you can launch and grow your own business!

**Participants:** Presented by the South Asian American Chamber of Commerce of Illinois (SAACCIL) & DCEO-OMEE

**Event Name:** Let’s Rise Together: How to Support Illinois’ AAPI Community

**Event Date/Time:** Tuesday, May 24, 12:00 p.m.

**Event Location:** Virtual

**Description:** Join us to hear directly from AAPI leaders about how all Illinoisians can rise together to support AAPI community members to combat anti-Asian sentiment. Illinois AAPI leaders and organizations have remained resilient and coalesced to fight AAPI hate through education, empowerment, and action.

**Event Name:** From International Student to Successful Illinois Tech Entrepreneur (webinar in Mandarin)

**Event Date/Time:** Tuesday, May 24, 7:00 p.m.

**Event Location:** Virtual

**Description:** Join us for a conversation with Chowbus CEO & Co-founder, Linxin Wen, to hear best practices and ideas for how leaders can pivot your business towards success!

**Participants:** This virtual event in Mandarin is presented by the Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community (CBCAC) and DCEO-OMEE.

**Mandarin Translation of Event:**

从国际学生到科技企业家：与Chowbus首席执行官兼联合创始人温林鑫的对话

5/24 星期二 下午七点到八点 [网络研讨会](#)，普通话进行

2016年，作为伊利诺伊州的一名留学生，温林鑫与人合作创办了食品配送公司Chowbus，与正宗亚洲美食为特色的小型独立餐厅合作。自推出该平台以来，总部位于芝加哥的Chowbus已经筹集了近六千多万美元的投资，扩大了服务范围，如今Chowbus在美国的23个主要城市与4000多家特色餐厅合作，提供餐馆餐馆外送，POS以及其他全套技术服务。加入我们，聆听温林鑫的最佳实践和想法！

此线上活动由华埠更好团结联盟 (CBCAC) 和伊利诺伊州商务与经济机会部 (DCEO)-少数族裔经济赋权办公室 (OMEE) 于 2022 年AAPI--亚裔美国人和太平洋岛民--传统月期间举办。

**Event Name:** Grow Your Online Business in 2022: From Experts Who Have Done the Work

**Event Date/Time:** Wednesday, May 25, 10:00 a.m.

**Event Location:** Virtual

**Description:** Learn from experienced e-commerce owners who will share their experiences and advice from running an online business through social media, Amazon, and additional e-commerce platforms through the monthly webinar series called *Advancing the Development of Minority Entrepreneurship (ADME)*.

**Participants:** Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Chinese Mutual Aid Association (CMAA), DCEO-OMEE & the Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC)

For more on AAPI Heritage Month and how to sign up for events in May, please visit [DCEO's website](#). For updates on other small business supports available, call the First Stop hotline at 1.800.252.2923, or follow us [@IllinoisDCEO](#) for updates on programs.