

City of Philadelphia



Council of the City of Philadelphia
Office of the Chief Clerk
Room 402, City Hall
Philadelphia

(Resolution No. 260485)

RESOLUTION

Recognizing May 2026 as Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month in the City of Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) have shaped the social, political, economic, and cultural fabric of this nation and this City; and

WHEREAS, Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month has its roots in a weeklong celebration that began in the first week of May 1979, which was eventually expanded to a month in 1990 by President George H.W. Bush, and permanently designated by Congress in 1992; and

WHEREAS, AAPI stories are integral to our nation's history. The first Filipinos landed at Morro Bay, California on October 18, 1587, aboard the Nuestra Señora de Buena Esperanza via the Manila galleon trade, and Filipino Americans have been permanent settlers since 1763, predating the Declaration of Independence; and

WHEREAS, South Asian seamen known as "lascars" appeared in American port cities as early as the 1760s, with 1763 records documenting their presence in Philadelphia, Virginia, and beyond. Working as deckhands, merchants, and cooks on merchant ships that regularly docked in Philadelphia, they were crucial to the maritime economy despite facing lower pay, racial discrimination, and neglect; and

WHEREAS, In the City of Philadelphia, Asian American and Pacific Island (AAPI) residents continue to shape the City's social and cultural landscape. Philadelphia's diverse food scene, robust healthcare system and entrepreneurial spirit have all been built through significant contributions by locals and immigrants from the AAPI community; and

WHEREAS, The AAPI community in Philadelphia encompasses more than 50 distinct cultures, nearly 75 countries, and over 100 languages. Over 8% of Philadelphians are AAPI, with the largest groups being Chinese, Indian, Vietnamese, Korean and Filipino; and

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WHEREAS, These diverse cultures are part of what makes our City great. AAPI residents live across the City, with major cultural pockets in South Philadelphia, Northeast Philadelphia, West Philadelphia, and Chinatown; and

WHEREAS, 11% of Philadelphia's small business owners are AAPI-owned, with new Asian-owned and -operated boutiques, markets, eateries, beauty shops and more popping up regularly. Some of Philadelphia's most renowned celebrations and tourism destinations are the product of the hard work and resilience of AAPI communities – such as Philadelphia's Chinese Lantern Festival, the Southeast Asian Market, the Festival of Colors at the Philadelphia Zoo, Shofuso Japanese Cultural Center, and Lunar New Year Celebrations; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia City Council recognized these important contributions by AAPI residents and business owners and advocated for the addition of an AAPI seat on Philadelphia's Economic Opportunity Review Committee, to ensure AAPI voices are uplifted as part of this important convening; and

WHEREAS, City Council recently allocated \$75,000 to support a public commemorative program led by the South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA), funding an early September 2026 event featuring a film screening, public discussion, and educational activities to highlight Philadelphia's role in the 1971 Blockade for Bangladesh and showcase a powerful chapter in our City's labor, immigrant, and civic history; and this investment reflects our ongoing commitment to uplift and resource the AAPI community, whose contributions to Philadelphia's civic, cultural, and economic life demand sustained recognition and support; and

WHEREAS, The contributions of the AAPI community in Philadelphia are invaluable to enhancing the cultural vitality of our City; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That May 2026 be recognized as Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month in Philadelphia.

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CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the seventh day of May, 2026.

Kenyatta Johnson
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Elizabeth McCollum
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmember Ahmad

Sponsored by: Council President Johnson, Councilmembers Ahmad, Phillips, Gilmore Richardson, Gauthier, Landau, Lozada, Brooks, Harrity, O'Rourke, Driscoll, Squilla and Bass