



# SAAPRI IMPACT REPORT

DECEMBER  
2025

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# letter from the executive director



**Dear SAAPRI family,**

The holidays are always a combination of excitement and hustle. As 2025 winds down, I have been thinking about what a year it has been and what it truly takes to continue showing up for our loved ones and our communities. None of this occurs in isolation. It is only possible because of all of us supporting one another.

At SAAPRI, that spirit guides everything we do. We center the community and stay grounded in evidence. When data is ignored, or voices go unheard, we listen closely, document lived experiences, and act with integrity.



This year, that has meant maintaining our dedication to community-based research, accessible educational resources, and quick responses whenever concerns arise. Given growing anti-immigrant sentiment, the task ahead of us is more important than ever. For SAAPRI, this necessitates a renewed and sustained commitment to research rooted in community experience, advocacy, outreach, and engagement throughout our core areas of impact: Democracy & Civic Action, Health Equity & Wellness, and Access to Justice. By examining underlying causes, holding listening sessions, emphasizing community narrative, and grounding our advocacy in evidence, we are dedicated to moving beyond superficial solutions. We strive to improve policies and systems that are responsive, equitable, and designed for lasting impact by bringing lived experiences into the forefront, so that communities are actively influencing the solutions that affect their lives rather than just reacting to challenges.

To our funders and donors, I am deeply grateful for your support. On behalf of our Board and team, thank you for your generosity and faith in our work. Your support allows us to engage thoughtfully, responsibly, and with our communities at the center. Thank you for standing with us. Please consider continuing your support by contributing a year-end gift to SAAPRI at: [tinyurl.com/SAAPRIGiving](https://tinyurl.com/SAAPRIGiving).

Here's to 2026 and continuing this work together, with heart, rigor, and our communities leading the way. I wish you all a restful holiday season and a wonderful new year ahead!

Sincerely,

*Shobhana*

Shobhana Johri Verma  
Executive Director



# our story so far....

## Our History

The South Asian American Policy & Research Institute (SAAPRI) is a non-profit and non-partisan organization founded in 2001 by Ann Lata Kalayil, K. Sujata, and Padma Rangaswamy. Based in Chicago, SAAPRI is a South Asian woman founded and led organization. In 2019, SAAPRI welcomed Shobhana Johri Verma as its fourth part-time Executive Director. She later transitioned into the role of SAAPRI's first full-time Executive Director.

For much of its first two decades, SAAPRI operated primarily as a volunteer-led organization. The dedication of dozens of volunteers in this early period highlights the importance of advancing the South Asian American community and the crucial role volunteers play in driving change and building resilience. At the time of SAAPRI's founding, there were only a small number of organizations focused on Asian American experiences, and even fewer, if any, organizations implemented a research-based or data-driven approach to address the unique needs of South Asian American communities.

SAAPRI's founding principles were grounded in bridging gaps and addressing the critical needs of a diverse and growing community through a non-partisan lens. The founders prioritized this non-partisan approach to foster unity within the community while highlighting its rich diversity and the unique needs of its various subsets.



# foundations of our work

## OUR MISSION

The South Asian American Policy & Research Institute (SAAPRI) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization established in 2001. Through community-based research and partnerships, SAAPRI drives impactful policy changes at the local, regional, and national level. We are dedicated to empowering and advocating for the South Asian American community by advancing data equity and ensuring representation that truly reflects our diverse communities.

SAAPRI's work has included research and policy initiatives on civic engagement, hate crimes, access to health care, economic development, and immigration. Projects are designed to create dialogue and better understanding, drawing from SAAPRI's expertise in community-based research and collaborations with partner organizations, academic institutions, and community members. SAAPRI advances public policy by proposing data-driven objectives based on community outreach. SAAPRI voices the community's concerns to public officials at the local, state, and national levels; works strategically in cross-racial coalitions; hosts public forums; and participates in speaking engagements to various audiences, including media and government.

## OUR VISION

SAAPRI envisions a future where South Asian American communities are empowered, visible, and have the support needed to advocate for their needs. Through dedicated research, advocacy, and meaningful engagement with decision-makers, we aim to create pathways for sustainable change. Our work fosters a responsive and equitable future where the voices of South Asian Americans are uplifted, and their unique needs addressed at local, regional, and national levels.

# OUR TEAM



**Shobhana Johri Verma**  
Executive Director



**Anushka Das**  
Programs & Operations  
Associate



**Francys Munoz**  
Communications  
Associate



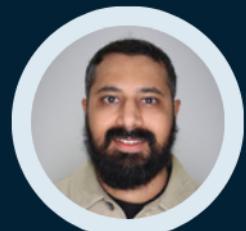
**Murtaza Ali**  
Finance Manager



**Jordan Stalker**  
Research and Strategic  
Development Advisor



**Julie Thomas Achettu**  
Education Consultant



**Sunny Trivedi**  
Research Advisor



**Anitha Muthuvalliappan**  
Research & Development  
Fellow



**Pooja Kansal**  
Access to Justice Fellow



**Chitra Iyer**  
Democracy & Civic Action  
Fellow



**Shiv Sawhney**  
Democracy & Civic Action  
Intern



**Priyanka Nair**  
Access to Justice Intern

# AREAS OF IMPACT



ACCESS TO JUSTICE

DEMOCRACY &  
CIVIC ACTION

HEALTH EQUITY  
& WELLNESS



# ACCESS TO JUSTICE



## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

**SAAPRI's Access to Justice work focuses on understanding and addressing the legal and systemic barriers that prevent South Asian Americans from fully exercising their rights.**

Through research, community engagement, and policy analysis, we examine how language access gaps, cultural barriers, and underreporting of harm limit access to legal protections, particularly in cases involving hate incidents, immigration challenges, and civil rights violations. Our work centers fairness, equity, and accountability, recognizing that justice must be both accessible and responsive to the lived experiences of our communities.

This area of impact includes research and advocacy efforts such as our Against Hate Initiative, which examines patterns of hate and discrimination and informs prevention and response strategies; our work advancing inclusive education through the TEACH Act and South Asian Oral History Project; and our Immigration Advocacy efforts, which analyze policy gaps and elevate community needs to support more just and equitable immigration systems.



Our Oral History Project preserves and uplifts South Asian American immigrant stories, ensuring our lived experiences inform education, advocacy, and policy conversations.

### Against Hate Initiative

Addressing and preventing hate through research, community education, and advocacy that centers South Asian American experiences.

# MOMENTS OF IMPACT

## 2025 | ACCESS TO JUSTICE



### HATE CRIME RESPONSE & PREVENTION COALITION MEETING

**Creating safer communities requires coordination, shared knowledge, and collective action.** SAAPRI, in partnership with the CASL Anti Hate Action Center, convened Chicagoland AANHPI community organizations for a Hate Crimes Response and Prevention Coalition meeting focused on strengthening local responses to hate and discrimination.

This convening builds directly on SAAPRI's 2024 hate crimes report, Countering Prejudice: Hate Crimes & Discrimination Against South Asian Americans. Together, this work advances a coordinated community approach to responding to **hate crimes and other harmful acts affecting AANHPI communities.**



### SAAPRI'S ORAL HISTORY PROJECT INSTRUCTION GUIDE AT THE FIELD MUSEUM

SAAPRI shared its Oral History Project and TEAACH Act-aligned curriculum with Illinois educators, highlighting tools that bring South Asian American history into classrooms. The "Memories and Milestones" exhibit traces South Asian immigration to Illinois between 1945 and 1965, documenting experiences shaped by race, gender, and global politics. This professional development workshop, hosted with partners at the Field Museum, supported educators in expanding inclusive and representative history education.

# MOMENTS OF IMPACT

## 2025 | ACCESS TO JUSTICE



### Centering South Asian Immigrant Experiences

SAAPRI's Immigration Program Framework is built on three core pillars: Informative, Preventative, and Reactive/Investigative. These guiding approaches allow SAAPRI to address the needs of South Asian Americans within the shifting landscape of immigration policy.

Looking ahead to 2026, SAAPRI plans to launch a new research initiative to document the immigration experiences of South Asian immigrants, a population often excluded from disaggregated data and policy design. Using targeted surveys and focus groups, the study will examine key barriers such as visa backlogs, family separation, language access gaps, and legal vulnerability. The findings will support evidence-based policy recommendations at the local, state, and federal levels to advance equitable and inclusive immigration systems.



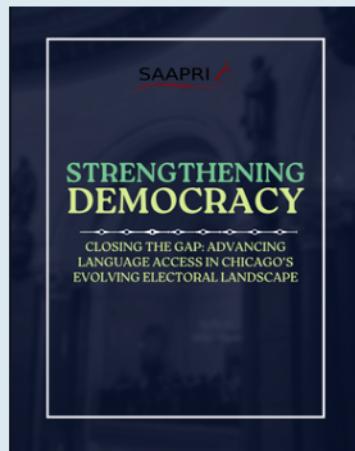
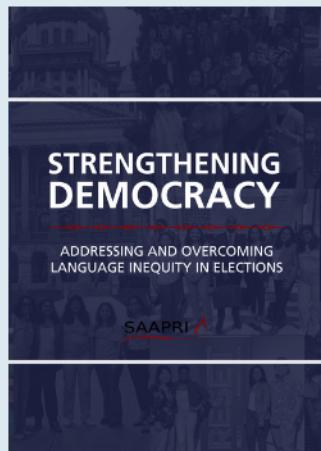


# DEMOCRACY AND CIVIC ACTION



## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

SAAPRI's Democracy & Civic Action work centers on examining how South Asian American communities experience and engage with civic systems. Through research, policy analysis, and community conversations, we explore barriers to participation, representation, and political inclusion. This work informs data-driven insights, public education efforts, and policy recommendations that elevate South Asian American voices in democratic spaces.



Building on SAAPRI's Strengthening Democracy Series 2024 report, *Addressing and Overcoming Language Inequity in Elections*, the new report, *Closing the Gap: Advancing Language Access in Chicago's Evolving Electoral Landscape*, explores how precinct consolidations following Chicago's 2022 redistricting impacted language access for South Asian voters at the polls.

# AREA OF IMPACT DEMOCRACY & CIVIC ACTION



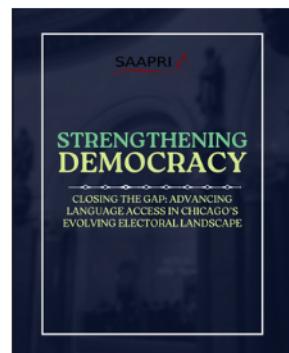
## STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY: CLOSING THE GAP: ADVANCING LANGUAGE ACCESS IN CHICAGO'S EVOLVING ELECTORAL LANDSCAPE

**Closing the Gap: Advancing Language Access in Chicago's Evolving Electoral Landscape** is part of SAAPRI's Strengthening Democracy series and examines how changes to Chicago's electoral map have shaped access to South Asian language assistance at polling places.

Building on our 2024 report on language inequity in elections, this analysis looks closely at the impacts of precinct consolidation following the 2022 redistricting, identifying where language support expanded, shifted, or disappeared.

The report maps language access at the precinct level and introduces a new dataset estimating the South Asian American Voting Eligible Population across Chicago. By making this previously unavailable data visible, the project provides election administrators and community advocates with a research-based tool to better identify high-need areas and inform future decisions around language coverage, bilingual judge placement, and voter outreach.

In late 2025, the SAAPRI team met with members of the Chicago Board of Election Commissioners (CBOE) to discuss the findings of the report. This meeting built on SAAPRI's ongoing partnership with CBOE and reflected a shared commitment to advancing language access at the polls. SAAPRI looks forward to continuing this collaboration to strengthen and expand language access for voters across Chicago. The full report will be released in January 2026.



# MOMENTS OF IMPACT

## 2025 | DEMOCRACY & CIVIC ACTION



### 2025 ASIAN AMERICAN ACTION DAY!

#### **Centering community voices where decisions are made!**

SAAPRI joined the Pan-Asian Voter Empowerment Coalition (PAVE) for the 12th Asian American Action Day at the Illinois State Capitol. This collective advocacy effort created space for Asian American communities to share their lived experiences directly with legislators and highlight the policy priorities shaping our lives. Together, we pushed for funding immigrant services, expanding access to justice, recognizing cultural and religious calendars, supporting inclusive history, and protecting sanctuary cities.



### Chicago Voter Engagement Forum

#### **Centering community voices where decisions are made!**

SAAPRI joined the Making Elections Accessible for All panel with CBCAC, the Chicago Board of Election Commissioners, and the Polish National Alliance at the Chicago Voter Engagement Forum. The panel focused on efforts to advocate for and serve limited English proficient (LEP) voters across the city's diverse language communities, including updates on multi-year language access campaigns, polling place accessibility, bilingual election judge recruitment, and key resources for voters to strengthen inclusive participation in the democratic process. SAAPRI also shared insights on the South Asian community using data from its 2024 Making Data Count report, helping inform strategies for equitable voter engagement.



# HEALTH EQUITY & AWARENESS



## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

SAAPRI's Health Equity work explores disparities in health outcomes, access to care, and culturally responsive health information within South Asian American communities. Through research initiatives, data collection, and community-centered discussions, we examine issues such as chronic illness, cancer screening, and mental health. These efforts contribute to a deeper understanding of health inequities and support advocacy for more inclusive health policies.



The Women's Health Series was a significant focus of SAAPRI's work in 2025, deepening our exploration of health challenges facing South Asian American women and laying the groundwork for a forthcoming report in 2026.



### Women's Health Report

A breakdown of SAAPRI's Women's Health Series



# MOMENTS OF IMPACT

## 2025 | HEALTH EQUITY & AWARENESS



### WOMEN'S HEALTH SERIES

SAAPRI's work on breast cancer within the South Asian American community revealed broader, unmet health challenges affecting South Asian American women. While breast cancer remains a critical concern, this work highlighted the need to address a wider range of pressing health issues. To address this need, SAAPRI developed the Women's Health Series, providing a space for open, community-based discussions on critical health topics.

Each session brought together medical experts, community leaders, and advocates to share culturally responsive information and foster open dialogue. Guided by a lifecycle framework, the series addressed the distinct health challenges women face at different ages, intentionally connecting each conversation to a specific stage in the journey of womanhood.

Findings from the series emphasized the importance of public accessibility and policy awareness. The resulting report explores recurring themes, systemic challenges, and recent legal and policy changes affecting women's health and research.

# MOMENTS OF IMPACT

## 2025 | HEALTH EQUITY & AWARENESS



**SAAPRI convened community members, researchers, and policymakers for an evening focused on advancing breast cancer research and health equity for South Asian Americans**

This event marked the launch of *Breaking Barriers: Unpacking Breast Cancer Challenges & Triumphs for South Asian Americans*, authored and presented by SAAPRI Health Equity Research Fellow Prottusha Sarkar, and brought together years of data, education, and community dialogue into a shared space for learning and reflection. Through a panel and roundtable discussion, participants explored persistent gaps in awareness, culturally responsive care, and data collection affecting South Asian communities.

The program was joined by Rep. Nabeela Syed, Rep. Kevin Olickal, Dr. Maura Quinlan of the Illinois Department of Public Health, breast cancer survivor and advocate Anita Banerji, and Dr. Priyanka Gokhale of UIC's Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology.





# THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS

# SAAPRI & SAAJCO



A series dedicated to creating a space for South Asians in the U.S. to access knowledge, exchange ideas, and connect with resources to navigate their rights, challenge discrimination, and engage meaningfully in civic life.

**South Asian American Policy & Research Institute (SAAPRI) and the South Asian American Justice Collaborative (SAAJCO)** joined forces to cohost the [Engaged Communities Series](#), a year-long multimedia initiative that launched in April 2025. This collaborative series features monthly webinars and podcasts that explores civil rights and key issues impacting South Asians and other affinity groups in the U.S.

This collaboration centers three interconnected themes: Know Your Rights, Unpacking Hate, and Civic Participation and Democracy.

This series is sponsored in part by the South Asian Bar Association of North America (SABA) Foundation and Indiaspora.

12    1000+    40,000+    30+

virtual  
webinars

webinar  
participants

digital  
engagements

engaged  
panelists &  
experts

# SAAPRI & CARE



## IMPROVING DATA EQUITY AND REPRESENTATION

**SAAPRI has collaborated with California State University, East Bay on the CARE Study (Collaborative Approach for Research and Education), a national initiative working to strengthen data equity and representation for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities.**

Through this partnership, SAAPRI is supporting efforts to expand culturally responsive health research, with a growing focus on increasing South Asian American participation in studies related to Alzheimer's disease, chronic conditions, and health across the lifespan.

Since its launch, CARE has supported more than 100 research studies and connected thousands of participants to opportunities that better reflect the diversity of AANHPI communities. Together, SAAPRI and California State East Bay are helping ensure South Asian American voices are included in health research and policy conversations, and advancing data-driven solutions that more accurately represent the realities of our communities.



# MOMENTS OF IMPACT



**On January 29, 2025**, SAAPRI and UIC's AIPhA hosted an interactive webinar on Autism, ADHD, and OCD that combined education with personal storytelling across cultural, societal, and healthcare perspectives. Through short presentations, moderated discussion, and community dialogue, participants gained knowledge, shared lived experiences, and accessed resources to better understand neurodivergence and reduce stigma.

## EXPLORING NEURODIVERGENCE PANEL



**On February 8, 2025**, SAAPRI hosted the second webinar in our Women's Health Series focused on cardiometabolic health for women, centering on heart health, diabetes prevention, and metabolic well-being. Expert speakers discussed the interconnected risks of conditions like high blood pressure, abnormal cholesterol, and obesity, and shared practical ways to support long-term health.

## WOMEN'S HEALTH SERIES: CARDIO-METABOLIC



**On March 3, 2025**, SAAPRI and SAAJCO launched the Engaged Communities Series, a year-long multimedia initiative bringing together webinars, podcasts, and discussions to explore civil rights, hate prevention, and civic engagement affecting South Asian communities. Beginning April 10, 2025, the series centers on Know Your Rights, Unpacking Hate, and Civic Participation to equip community members with knowledge, resources, and pathways to meaningful action.

## LAUNCH OF ENGAGED COMMUNITIES SERIES



**On March 23, 2025**, Team SAAPRI attended India Blooms at the Chicago Botanic Garden, taking time to reconnect, reflect, and recharge together. Immersed in the beauty of India's nature and heritage, this moment of pause reminded us of the importance of collective care as we continue engaging in meaningful and often challenging community work.

## INDIA BLOOMS ORCHID SHOW

# MOMENTS OF IMPACT



**On April 4, 2025**, SAAPRI Executive Director Shobhana Johri Verma and Research & Strategic Development Advisor Jordan Stalker attended a Policy and Social Impact Bootcamp at The University of Chicago.

## POLICY & SOCIAL IMPACT BOOTCAMP AT UIC



**On April 15, 2025**, SAAPRI Executive Director Shobhana Johri Verma joined Cook County leaders to celebrate the launch of the County's new "I Speak Cards" and the official designation of April as Language Access Month. These milestones highlight the growing commitment to language access as a critical step toward more equitable and inclusive public services.

## COOK COUNTY LAUNCHES NEW "I SPEAK CARDS"



**On April 30, 2025**, SAAPRI and the Pan-Asian Voter Empowerment Coalition (PAVE) convened the 12th Asian American Action Day at the Illinois State Capitol, bringing community voices directly to lawmakers. Advocates pushed for key priorities including funding immigrant services, increasing access to justice, establishing a cultural and religious calendar, supporting inclusive history, and protecting sanctuary cities.

## 2025 ASIAN AMERICAN ACTION DAY!



**On May 6, 2025**, SAAPRI team members joined the Mayor to celebrate the contributions of AANHPI communities across Chicago and recognize the collective work of community organizations ensuring every voice is heard. We're grateful to the Mayor's Office for honoring this shared commitment to visibility and inclusion.

## CHICAGO AAPI HERITAGE MONTH CELEBRATION

# MOMENTS OF IMPACT



**On May 14, 2025**, SAAPRI concluded its Women's Health Series with a conversation on elderly care, focusing on the cultural, emotional, and systemic challenges facing South Asian caregivers. Led by Health Equity Fellow Protusha Sarkar alongside Dr. Arunima Sarkar, the discussion highlighted dementia, caregiving support, and the need for culturally responsive resources for aging communities.

## WOMEN'S HEALTH SERIES WEBINAR: ELDERLY CARE



**On July 10, 2025** SAAPRI & SAAJCO hosted a timely conversation on workplace rights amid recent federal rollbacks to diversity, equity, and inclusion policies, focusing on how these changes impact workplace protections. Legal experts guided participants through recognizing and addressing discrimination, understanding their rights, and navigating the evolving legal landscape.

## ECS: WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION WEBINAR



**On July 26, 2025** SAAPRI participated in SPARK, a two-day symposium hosted by the IgA Nephropathy Foundation that brought together patients and caregivers to learn about living with IgAN and navigating care. Executive Director Shobhana Johri Verma joined the panel on the burden of IgAN among AANHPI communities, highlighting the need for greater awareness, culturally responsive care, and equity in research.

## SPARK IS A 2-DAY SYMPOSIUM HOSTED BY THE IGA NEPHROPATHY FOUNDATION



**On September 16, 2025**, SAAPRI Executive Director Shobhana Johri Verma led a conversation at IA Impact's 2025 Impact Summit, centering South Asian American changemakers working across government, nonprofits, and advocacy. The discussion reflected on what it means to serve our communities from within institutions and highlighted the power of leadership, accountability, and collective action in advancing equity.

## DESI PERSIST 2025 SUMMIT & GALA

# MOMENTS OF IMPACT



**On October 5, 2025**, SAAPRI was proud to sponsor The Chicago Kasam Inc.'s 2nd Annual South Asian Festival Showcase, a vibrant celebration of South Asian creativity and community in Chicagoland. The event brought together dance, film, music, fashion, storytelling, and comedy, highlighting the incredible talent and cultural expression within our community and building on the success of its inaugural showcase in 2024.

## CHICAGO KASAM: ANNUAL SOUTH ASIAN FESTIVAL SHOWCASE



On November 17, 2025, SAAPRI joined more than 150 community leaders at Casa Central in Humboldt Park for the first Allies United coalition meeting. Hosted by a broad network of partner organizations, the gathering created space for collective response to recent federal actions impacting civil rights and community safety across Chicago.

## ALLIES UNITED COALITION MEETING



**On December 4, 2025**, SAAPRI hosted a timely conversation examining stereotypes, representation, and how media narratives can contribute to real-world bias and harm. Moderated by Jordan Stalker with panelists Lakshmi Gandhi and Dr. Kavita Daiya, the discussion explored how harmful portrayals take root and what it takes to push for more accurate and inclusive representation.

## ECS: STEREOTYPES AND REPRESENTATION

# OUR JOURNEY IN 2025



# OUR JOURNEY IN 2025





## support our work!



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# THANK YOU

