

What Is Going On at CPACS?

A summary for media and partners

The Center for Pan Asian Community Services (CPACS) was **founded in 1980** on the belief that “People Need People”. It is the first, largest, and longest standing organization in the Southeast focused on issues concerning Asian Americans and other underserved populations.

CPACS has evolved from a volunteer-run organization helping mostly Korean Americans, into a multi-service organization with racially, ethnically, and religiously diverse staff whose linguistic ability covers some 18 different language groups (both Asian and non-Asian). CPACS serves approximately 6,000 clients per month through its comprehensive and family-centered social and health services, including housing, education, employment, citizenship, and advocacy.

In 2013, the walk-in health clinic at CPACS was formally approved as a Federally Qualified Health Center called CCHC (CPACS Cosmo Health Center).

CCHC, also known as COSMO, is a part of CPACS and are currently under one EIN and have historically operated under one CEO: Chaiwon Kim.

2021

The Board of Directors approved Dr. Jung Ha Kim (former board member and the founder of the Asian American Community Research Institute at CPACS) as the new CEO of CPACS and Chaiwon Kim as COO of CCHC. By misrepresenting the findings of the HRSA (Health Resources and Services Administration) evaluation of CCHC in May, Chaiwon Kim instituted co-CEO system by July: Dr. Jung Ha Kim as the CEO of CPACS and Chaiwon Kim as the CEO of CCHC.

Starting from August, Dr. Jung Ha Kim and Vice Presidents of CPACS communicated with the Board to address the misappropriation of the HRSA findings by Chaiwon Kim, and dysfunctionality of the co-CEO system which the Board never officially approved, and submitted the evidence of mismanagement of the program funding by Chaiwon Kim.

Link to Audit: https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/display_audit/21490520211

FEBRUARY 2022

After the CPACS staff called an urgent meeting, the Board of Directors engaged the firm Krevolin & Horst to conduct an internal investigation following specific and general concerns about federal compliance with applicable laws, conflicts of interest, and organizational culture.

The board hosted 2 town halls with CPACS & CCHC (COSMO) staff to explain the investigation and process and invite staff to volunteer information

Investigators documented Co-CEO Chaiwon Kim showed immediate resistance to the announcement of the internal investigation, emailing all Cosmo employees to share she “strongly recommend[ed] against it.” and calling the investigation an “unsolicited witch hunt.”

MARCH 2022

Investigators conducted interviews with various staff members of CPACS and CCHC and co-CEO's to document experiences .

After the conclusion of the interviews, this firm received emails from two employees who believed that they were being retaliated against by Chaiwon Kim for participating in these interviews. These concerns were reported immediately to the Board.

APRIL 2022

Investigators shared with the board “Factual Findings and Analysis” [report available in full here.](#) Summary of key findings:

- *Significant conflict of financial and governance interest:*
 - Co-CEO Chaiwon Kim and husband own four (4) buildings in which COSMO operates and receive rent payments and spent on renovations (\$1,500,000 from 2013-2021).
 - Capital improvements raising the value of co-CEO properties were approved in 2020 for over \$400,000. Properties are held under a management company called BOGO World Management. Funding came from HRSA, federal grant funds.
 - Board member Michelle Ferreyra is the managing partner of BOGO World Real Estate Management
- *Nepotism and Favoritism in Compensation:*
 - Co-CEO Chaiwon Kim appointed her son as Director of HR (Klyde Kim) and promoted him to a Vice President approving annual significant increases of compensation atypical for the rest of the staff
 - Co-CEO Chaiwon Kim hired her sister Chaieun in 2022.
 - Staff members “handpicked” by co-CEO Chaiwon Kim reported significant increases of compensation (between 20-36%). Staff reports typical raises are around 5%
- *Financial Mismanagement & Commingling of Funds:*
 - Vehicles were purchased with federal HRSA assigned funding for purposes other than what the funding was intended for.
 - Established financial & procurement process was not followed for approval.
 - Other improper expenditures are documented in the investigation report including the underwriting of personal expenses
- *Improper Payments for Chaiwon Kim's husband*
 - Husband was compensated for medical services while he did not report for work and/or was unable to perform clinical services

CPACS Board Chair, Patrick stepped down. Vice Chair Aisah Gayle was appointed as the Acting Board Chair.

MAY 2022

The Acting Board Chair, Aisah Gayle, labeled investigation findings and report as “allegations” and began actions to remove dissenting board members from their positions. The second law firm, Southern Health Lawyers that worked closely with CCHC as a part of the GAPHC (Georgia Association of Primary Health Care) was hired to do another investigation and wrap-up all previous investigative findings.

To date, three investigations have taken place. None have cleared up co-CEO Chaiwon Kim from wrongdoing.

JUNE 2022

Efforts to remove dissenting board members were followed by the illegitimate appointment of 5 new board members.

- After the regular board meeting was “adjourned” and some participants left the meeting, a slate of board candidates was presented.
- Vote was not included in the agenda, bios were not shared with the board as listed in the bylaws, one-member nomination “committee” was formed and presented the new board candidates.
- 3 out of the 5 purported new board members present existing conflicts including:
 - Norma Zuñiga currently reports to Board Chair Aisah Gayle under the Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
 - Josue Rosales is currently a significant financial sponsor of the Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
 - Jess Villegas, current member of the Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Another purported Board member, Brian O Williams, the current CEO of Four Corners of Primary Health Care Center, has an obvious connection to Cosmo.

All 5 purported new board members were introduced on June 30 by completely disregarding 11 potential new board members that co-CEO Dr. Jung Ha Kim, VPs, and other staff nominated to the board over the year.

JULY 2022

On July 19, 2022, [CPACS Board of Directors heard directly the concerns from staff](#) and their requests to:

- Do not remove/terminate Dr. Jung Ha Kim as CEO
- Complete the separation of CPACS and CPACS Cosmo Health Center with two separate Board of Directors
- Remove CPACS Cosmo Health Center from CPACS EIN (Employer Identification Number)

- Do NOT transfer any funds, assets, bank accounts, departments, and programs from CPACS to CPACS Cosmo Health Center
- Resignation of all current members from the Board of Directors of CPACS.

CPACS Staff made clear the Board's inability to meet their fiduciary duty for the organization and made 5 demands on July 19 and asked to respond by the end of July 21. No response from the board was received.

The Board voted out 2 dissenting members and Aisha Gayle became the Chair of the Board.

In response to the lack of response by the Board of Directors, [a community letter informing of the issues was developed and signed by over 600 staff members \(current and former\), community supporters, and board members \(current and former\) affirming the same demands shared by the staff to the board.](#)

Over 55 of current CPACS staff including Co-CEO Dr. Jung Ha Kim organized a [media conference to demand changes and transparency to the board on July 26, 2022. Ethnic media was invited.](#)

In retaliation for organizing a media press conference, the following actions were taken:

- Board Chair Aisah Gayle prohibited co-CEO Dr. Jung Ha Kim to use the organization-wide mass communication about the ongoing investigation. Then the Board Chair Aisah Gayle prohibited both Co-CEOs from sending out mass emails all employees of CPACS and now manages CPACS Staff listserv for the entire agency.
- The CPACS IT Administrative privileges were revoked.
- The CPACS Main building key control was revoked and some staff were locked out of the building.

AUGUST 2022

Events of August 4, 2022

A protest outside of work hours was organized by staff at the parking lot of the building was staged on the evening of August 4 during the CPACS Board of Directors meeting.

Dr. Jung Ha Kim was hand-served a letter noting her immediate removal from her position as Co-CEO. There was no justification or context given for the firing of Dr. Jung Ha Kim.

Events of August 5, 2022

Staff walked out in solidarity with Dr. Jung Ha Kim on August 5.

[A GoFundMe to support staff subject of retaliation was launched](#)

Board Chair Aisah Gayle announced the hiring of interim CEO named Janice Sherman, a person unknown to CPACS Staff, including Vice Presidents. Two dissenting board members communicated they were not informed of the hiring of the interim CEO.

Board Chair Aisah Gayle hired police officers to remove protesting staff from CPACS property. Police were also called on Dr. Jung Ha Kim who was protesting peacefully with staff. Meanwhile, Chaiwon Kim, who was also terminated from her position, was still able to be CPACS Cosmo Health Center and had access to her CPACS email and other accounts. Chaiwon Kim is also telling staff that she is “retiring” instead of being terminated.

Board Chair Aisah Gayle sent to all staff members a “cease and desist” letter prohibiting staff from talking about CPACS on social media and sharing board member contact information.

Events of August 8, 2022

Staff continued to protest outside of the CPACS Main Office Building to continue to demand for CPACS Board Members to resign from the Board. [WSBTv](#) and other media outlets covered our protest.

Events of August 9, 2022

The [Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors' Executive Committee issued a statement](#) on CPACS.

Two of the CPACS Board of Directors resigned, Nguyen (Nick) H. Tu and Norma Zúñiga-Cardoza.

SEPTEMBER 2022

The CPACS Board of Directors now comprises five members: Board Chair Ish Gayle, Monsoon Lee, Michelle Kim Ferreyra, Charlene Fang, and Wooiyi Yin. Both Charlene and Wooiyi have been suspended from the Board of Directors.

Events of September 8, 2022

CPACS Interim CEO Jennifer Barnes McCants terminated the employment of six staff members, of which 5 were federal whistleblowers:

Vice President Frank Lee
Vice President Yotin Srivanjarean
Vice President Alnory Gutlay
Vice President Victoria Huynh
CFO Cappel Sookdeo
HR Manager Heejin Ko

In reaction to the firing, several key program staff resigned in protest, crippling the internal infrastructure at CPACS.

OCTOBER 2022

Board Chair Aisah Gayle is no longer on the CPACS Board of Directors. Michelle Ferreyra and Misoon Lee are still members of the Board of Directors. Ferraya is also Acting Chair of the Board. Charlene Fang and Wooiyi Yin were officially voted off from the Board of Directors.

Seven additional Board Members were added to the Board of Directors. These individuals have ties to Chaiwon Kim or Georgia Primary Care Association. New Board Members include:

Bob Williams
Anthony Roark (Family Health Centers of Georgia)
Elizabeth Ji (Attorney)
Kelly Kim (Relator)
Yosef Ohayon
Barbara Bush
Erin Chin

NOVEMBER 2022

Events of November 2-3, 2022

CPACS Interim CEO Dr. Jennifer McCants contract was scheduled to end on Friday, November 11, 2022. The Board of Directors had her removed early from her position on Wednesday, November 2.

On Thursday, November 3, the CPACS Board of Directors Acting Chair Michelle Ferraya announced that Stephen Lee, a former Program Director, would be the Acting CEO of CPACS. Stephen Lee is continuing a culture of fear and nepotism. His wife, Judith Lee, is the Senior HR Specialist. Since August 2022, he has been intimidating staff for speaking out against Chaiwon Kim and the mismanagement of the organization.

Events of November 11

CPACS Staff learned there was a new Accounting Manager, Chaieun Lee who is former CEO Chaiwon Kim's sister.

Events of the Week of November 14

Rumors were confirmed that former CEO, Chaiwon Kim, is working at CPACS Cosmo Health Center again despite being under federal investigation. It is believed that she is heavily advising Acting CEO Stephen Lee.

CPACS Transportation leaders were informed the previous week that most of the department would be laid off from CPACS from a lottery system or drawing of names. This would include the 8 staff members including, both managers and drivers. After the drawing, only 3 staff members would remain. Drivers who worked exclusively for Cosmo Community Health Center were excluded from the drawing and are still employed. The drawing has been postponed to Friday, November 18.

DECEMBER 2022

Events of the Week of December 26

Acting CEO Stephen Lee emailed select staff on Wednesday, December 27 to let them know that they were to stop serving SNAP Program clients on Friday, December 30 and their last day of employment would be Tuesday, January 10, 2023. Acting CEO Lee did not communicate with supervisors prior to this email and provided very limited details in the email. This created a large amount of chaos and confusion among staff.

CPACS ESL Department closed most of its programming on Friday, December 30, due to loss of funding. Acting CEO Stephen Lee has failed to effectively let staff know about the closing of programs.

JANUARY 2023

- An individual staff files a charge with the NLRB for potential labor violations that may have occurred in the previous 6 months

FEBRUARY 2023

Events of the Week of February 27th

CPACS Staff file to unionize with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) under the Union Name "CPACS Workers United" working with Worker's United, SEIU Affiliate on February 27, 2023.

- 02/28 - CPACS Excel and Senior Services Programming ends, and staff terminated except for a couple of Korean Staff who were selected

MARCH 2023

Events of the Week of March 13

- There have been reports of worker intimidation towards COSMO staff
- On Monday, March 13, Stephen holds a Mandatory staff meeting, discouraging union activity
 - Stephen reveals the personal medical emergency of a staff member who needed to work hybrid and boasts that he can negotiate with staff without a union
 - Stephen reports the salaries of various employees and including Program Managers and Directors
 - Recording can be provided upon request
- On March 15, Stephen calls Program Director Sarah Brechin into his office to address his behavior from the Monday meeting. He asks Sarah to host education and staff training about the Pros and Cons of unionizing. She refuses and explains she cannot get involved legally since management cannot be involved in unions.
- On March 17, Program Director of ACA, Marketing, and Advocacy Sarah Brechin was terminated by Stephen for "Negligence" and "not addressing staff concerns to him directly"

- On the same day, Housing Coordinator Eunjung was terminated later for “client complaints”

Events of the Week of March 20

- On March 20, Program Director of Youth Programs Meron Tuccu was terminated despite Stephen mentioning he does a good job and has a likable personality. Meron was one of the supporters of a union. Youth Staff members confront Stephen and demanded Meron be reinstated. Stephen refused to listen to those staff.
- Martha receives a threatening email from HR head, Judith Lee, questioning time off after it had been approved 3 weeks prior. There are reasons why she was being targeted because Martha was the first staff to speak up during the meeting showing her support for unions during the March 13 meeting.
- On Friday, March 25, Stephen hosts a Town hall meeting with the new board of directors in which they also discouraged union activity
 - Recording can be provided on request
 - It has been also revealed that a Southern Health Lawyer is on the Board of Directors, Sally Austin.
- Office Manager’s hours are cut to part-time from full time without explanation

APRIL 2023

On April 3, Worker’s United files 4 charges against CPACS for Unfair Labor Practices (ULP)

- The alleged ULPs that CPACS Violated:
 - 8(a)(3) Discharge (Including Layoff and Refusal to Hire (not salting))
 - 2 Charges: 8(a)(1) Coercive Statements (Threats, Promises of Benefits, etc.)
 - 8(a)(1) Coercive Actions (surveillance, etc.)
- On April 6, All of Domestic Violence (DV) Prevention Staff terminated for “Lack of Work”
- On April 7, the Program Director of Domestic Violence resigns from CPACS
- On April 14, staff get email in the end of the day from Board Chair Michelle Ferrerya confirming that Stephen Lee is officially the CEO of CPACS

QUESTIONS: savecpacs@gmail.com & cpacsworkersunited@gmail.com

What’s Next

Unless the agency’s current Board of Directors is reformed with community and funders elected neutral and unbiased members, the agency will continue to implode and be riddled with unethical and corrupt behavior.

- At the current state, we ask community members, partners, funders, government officials, and stakeholders to urge the current leadership to develop a transparent plan on how the organization will downsize due to lost funding and resources that includes compensation.

- If the Board of Directors is reformed with neutral members who have needed expertise to rebuild the agency, we would like to see a transparent process for a new CEO that includes a national search.
- CPACS bylaws and HR processes need to be updated to protect workers' rights and eliminate biases and nepotism. Processes should include fair hiring and firing, promotions, and salary grading system to promote equity across the organization. Equity, transparency, and accountability should be some of the top values when reforming the agency.

Created: August 6, 2022

Updated: April 17, 2023