



June 22, 2020

The Honorable James E. Clyburn
Chairman of the House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis
200 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steve Scalise
Ranking Member of the House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis
2049 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Clyburn and Ranking Member Scalise:

On behalf of the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA) and undersigned Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander organizations, we are writing to urge you to fully include the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community in the scope of work for the House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus. More specifically, we ask that the Subcommittee:

- Include AAPIs in the investigation and discussion around the disparate health impacts of the COVID-19 virus.
- Investigate and provide policy recommendations with respect to the rise of anti-Asian racism that has been observed in accordance with the COVID-19 pandemic.

About NCAPA

NCAPA is a coalition of 37 national Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) organizations around the country. We strive for equity and justice by organizing our diverse strengths to influence policy and shape public narratives. We envision a world where Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders work together to shape our own future as part of the broader racial justice movement and advance our communities and country towards a common purpose of progress, prosperity, and well-being for all. NCAPA's members include organizations that work in civil rights, immigration, health, education, and housing and economic justice, and have constituencies across the diverse AAPI community.

COVID-19 Impact on AAPI Health

On June 4, 2020, the Select Subcommittee held a briefing entitled "An Unequal Burden: Addressing Racial Health Disparities in the Coronavirus Pandemic." While we appreciate the Subcommittee's work to understand these disparities, and inclusion of AAPI witnesses, the lack of meaningful discussion around AAPI health disparities is not only concerning, but also not representative of the disproportionate health impacts that these communities are facing during the pandemic.



On May 27, 2020, the U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means held a hearing titled “The Disproportionate Impact of COVID-19 on Communities of Color,” where Dr. Raynald Samoa, who leads the National Pacific Islander COVID-19 Response Team, served as a witness.¹ On June 10, 2020, NCAPA submitted a written statement for the record on behalf of its member organizations with the hope that the Committee will continue to address the impact of COVID-19 on all communities of color, including those of all Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islanders.

Here are some of the findings Dr. Samoa highlighted during the hearing:²

- Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders have the highest rate of confirmed COVID-19 cases in California, King County in Washington state, Clark County in Nevada and the second highest in Utah, Oregon, Arkansas, and Colorado. In Los Angeles County, the death rate for Pacific Islanders (PIs) is 12 times higher than it is for whites, 9 times higher than for Asians, 7 times higher than for Latinos, and 5 times higher than for African Americans.
- As of June 11, 2020, cases in California have increased by 8.3%, 20.1% in Utah, 22.4% in Washington, 61.1% in Arkansas, 4.3% in Colorado, and 28.8% in Oregon. Illinois has 328 cases, 16 in Alaska, and 13 in Idaho. NHPI cases in all these states rank the highest out of all racial and ethnic groups.³
- PIs have extremely high rates of chronic disease such as diabetes, certain cancers, and heart disease, which increases their risk of death if they contract COVID-19. Compared to non-Hispanic whites, PIs are 80% more likely to be obese, 30% more likely to have asthma, and 2.5 times more likely to have a diabetes diagnosis. Delaying the diagnosis and treatment of COVID-19 for many PIs is the fact that 20% do not have medical coverage when compared to 11.4% of non-Hispanic whites, which affects their timely access to needed health care services.
- Further complicating timely access to care, PIs report also experiencing discrimination in healthcare settings and a mistrust in seeking health care services. Immigration status, language barriers, and cost are barriers to care for NHPIs. Nearly 253,000 NHPI speak a language other than English at home, and Marshallese, Fijian, Palauan, Tongan, and Samoan Americans have higher-than-average rates of limited English proficiency.
- PIs are more likely than other racial and ethnic groups to have fewer financial resources and to live in large multi-generational households and densely populated neighborhoods. As many as 24% of PIs work in essential jobs, such as in the military, security, service-related industry, and healthcare, placing them at higher risk of infection.

¹ <https://pi-copce.org/covid19response/>

²

https://waysandmeans.house.gov/sites/democrats.waysandmeans.house.gov/files/documents/Samoa_Testimony.pdf

³ Covid-19 NHPI Data Updates via National Pacific Islander COVID-19 Response Team



Furthermore, it is estimated that over 2 million AAPIs work in frontline industries and are therefore at increased risk of contracting COVID-19 as a result of transmission from coworkers, interactions with the public, and unsafe workplaces. This is further exacerbated by the fact that more than 1 in 4 private sector workers do not earn a single paid sick day and among those who do, most don't earn enough paid sick time to quarantine for the recommended 14 days or to recover from COVID-19.

One specific example would be the Laotian American community. As a result of COVID-19, Laotian Americans are dying in meat companies that have been deemed essential to meet America's needs. With a combined poverty and low-income rate of 41% and a per capita income of \$17,951,⁴ many members of the Laotian American community are working on the front lines, risking their lives for the rest of us—not only without reward, but without basic dignities like paid sick leave and access to health insurance.

Many South Asians are also serving on the frontlines, such as in healthcare, pharmacies, and grocery stores,⁵ putting them at higher exposure to infection without adequate worker protections. According to a report by South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT), nearly 10% of U.S. South Asians live in poverty.⁶ Many essential workers live in low-income, overcrowded homes and neighborhoods.⁷ Emerging evidence from New York City indicates the Bangladeshi community has been disproportionately affected.⁸ Currently, South Asian infection and mortality rates are likely being undercounted. Data on COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths are currently incomplete as COVID-19 statistics are undercounted in South Asian communities, often being labelled as “other” or “unknown” race categories.⁹ Without this data, COVID-19 management responses cannot be streamlined to the specific needs of these communities.

Anti-Asian Racism

As many states begin to reopen, the Asian American community is anticipating an uptick in anti-Asian racism that we have observed throughout this pandemic, and urge the committee to consider this impact as well.

Beginning as early as February of this year, as the number of COVID-19 cases have increased, so too have attacks targeting Asian Americans. Hate and bigotry are not consistent with realizing the promise of American democracy where all of us have an equal voice. On March 11, 2020, in response to the increasing incidents all over the country targeting the Asian American

⁴ https://www.searac.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/SEARAC_NationalSnapshot_PrinterFriendly.pdf

⁵ <https://www.thejuggernaut.com/south-asian-frontliners-new-york>

⁶ <https://saalt.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/SAALT-Demographic-Snapshot-2019.pdf>

⁷ <https://jamanetwork.com/channels/health-forum/fullarticle/2764817>

⁸ <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/nyc-bangladeshi-community-struggles-cope-coronavirus-200429180945222.html>

⁹ <https://thecity.nyc/2020/04/south-asian-leaders-say-community-covid-toll-undercounted.html>



community in connection to COVID-19, NCAPA and 260 civil rights organizations sent a letter¹⁰ to House and Senate leadership calling for unity and denouncing the increase in racist attacks and discrimination against the Asian American community. As a result of that advocacy, on April 17, 2020, we sent another letter¹¹ with over 450 civil rights organizations to express our support for H.Res. 908, introduced by Representative Grace Meng and its Senate companion, S.Res.580, introduced by Senators Kamala Harris, Tammy Duckworth, and Mazie Hirono.

According to the latest STOP AAPI report by the Asian Pacific Policy & Planning Council (A3PCON), Chinese for Affirmative Action (CAA), and in partnership with NCAPA member organizations, Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC, OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates, and SAALT, between April 8 to May 13, 2020, there were 1,843 reports of anti-Asian discrimination due to COVID-19. Aggregated data from 45 states, as well as Washington, D.C., demonstrate these self-reported incidents of the widespread racism that Asian Americans continue to experience. Some of the continued trends include:¹²

- Verbal harassment (69.3%) and shunning (22.4%) make up the highest proportion of cases
- Civil rights violations, such as workplace discrimination (4.8%); being barred from establishments (2.9%) and being barred from transportation (1.1%) make up 8.8% of the incidents
- Physical assaults make up 8.1% of the incidents
- Incidents at businesses (42.1%) exceed those in public places (38.9%)
- Women are harassed 2.4 times more than men
- Elderly make up 7.8% of the respondents

We respectfully request the Subcommittee to include Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities in future discussions about racial disparities. Additionally, we ask this Subcommittee to consider reviewing non-health impacts of COVID-19 on minority communities, including the increase in anti-Asian racism and xenophobia. NCAPA and our partners stand ready to work with you to ensure that the Subcommittee's work is inclusive of all communities of color, including AANHPIs. If you have any questions or concerns or for follow-up, please contact Gregg Orton, NCAPA's National Director at gregg@ncapaonline.org.

¹⁰

https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ncapa/pages/89/attachments/original/1583935643/NCAPA_Letter_to_House_Leadership.pdf?1583935643

¹¹ https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ncapa/pages/622/attachments/original/1587139224/NCAPA-DI_Letter_Final.pdf?1587139224

¹² http://www.asianpacificpolicyandplanningcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/STOP_AAPI_HATE_Report_4_30_20-5_13_20.pdf



Sincerely,

The National Council of Asian Pacific Americans

AAFF South Florida Region

American Samoa Society of Washington, DC

API Initiative

Arizona Asian Chamber of Commerce Incorporated

Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum

Asian American Arts Centre

Asian American Federation of Florida

Asian American Pacific Islander Coalition of Alaska (AAPICA)

Asian American Unity Coalition

Asian American Writers' Workshop

Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC

Asian Americans Rising

Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Pennsylvania (APABA-PA)

Asian Pacific American Chamber of Commerce (APACC)

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO

Asian Pacific Community in Action

Asian Pacific Islander American Public Affairs Association (APAPA)

Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy and Leadership (APPEAL)

Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council

Asian Services In Action (ASIA)

Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)

Cambodian American Chamber of Commerce

Chinese American Citizens Alliance Portland



Chinese Chamber of New York

Chinese for Affirmative Action

Consortium of Asian American Theaters and Artists

Council of Korean Americans

Dayton Chapter Japanese American Citizens League

East Coast Asian American Student Union (ECAASU)

Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)

FASTER - Filipino Americans in STEAM - Science Technology Engineering Arts and Mathematics

Fiji Indigenous Peoples Foundation

Filipino American Service Group, Inc. (FASGI)

Florida Asian Services

Florida Asian Women Alliance

Hawaiian Inter Club Council of Southern California

Hmong National Development

Japanese American Citizens League

Japanese American Citizens League Chicago

Kaha i ka Panoa Kaleponi Hawaiian Civic Club

Ke Ali`i Maka`ainana Hawaiian Civic Club of Washington, D.C.

Korean Community Center of the East Bay

Korean Resource Center

Laotian American National Alliance

LEAP (Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics)

Leviathan Lab

Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company, Inc.

National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA)

National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)



New Mexico Asian Family Center

OCA - South Florida Chapter

OCA Greater Chicago

OCA Greater Cleveland - Asian Pacific American Advocates

OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates

OCA-Greater Washington, DC Chapter (OCA-DC)

Pacific American Community Cultural Center

Philippine Study Group of Minnesota (PSGM)

Portland Bing Kong Tong

Seattle Chapter JACL

SHK Global Health

Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)

South Asian Americans Leading Together

South Asian Network

South Asian Public Health Association (SAPHA)

Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)

U.T.O.P.I.A. Seattle