

March 6, 2015

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Vice Chairwoman
Senate Appropriations Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Cochran and Mikulski:

On behalf of the over 200 undersigned national, state, territorial and U.S.-affiliated Pacific Island organizations, we write to ensure continued funding for a critical federal program aimed at addressing racial and ethnic health disparities. As a nation, we continue to observe the impact that health disparities have on our communities each year – a loss of approximately 83,000 racial and ethnic minorities and a cost of over \$300 billion.

Across our nation, health disparities continue to persist and widen in communities historically marginalized because of poverty, and other social, economic, and environmental barriers. These communities experience a high burden of life-threatening diseases, lower quality of care, barriers to health services, and worse health outcomes when compared to the general population. Federal programs that address racial and ethnic health disparities are critical for overcoming barriers to care in underserved communities. Yet, the President's FY 2016 Budget eliminated funding for the Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health ("REACH") Program.

Continued REACH funding is urgently needed so that the important work of eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities may continue. **The undersigned organizations urge Congress to restore REACH to the funding level provided in the FY 2015 Labor/HHS/Education Appropriations bill at \$50.9 million.**

The REACH Program is one of only a handful of community-based, culturally relevant and multi-disciplinary programs dedicated specifically to the elimination of racial and ethnic health disparities. REACH has historically provided direct support to communities with the highest rates of health morbidity and mortality and the greatest burden of disease to develop sustainable solutions to the health issues of these communities.

Over the past 10 years, REACH has documented continued successes in engaging impacted communities with a focus on addressing the underlying conditions of chronic disease. The program has reduced the prevalence of health risk factors and improved health care outcomes in REACH communities at rates that exceed national trends through the development and use of evidence and practice-based interventions relevant and responsive to the specific needs of each community. REACH Programs have been effective in supporting personal responsibility for health through broad-based systems changes that help to make the healthy choice the default choice.

With more than 150 peer-reviewed publications, the REACH program has proven the effectiveness of community-driven interventions in reducing health care costs and demonstrating that health disparities are not intractable. For example, nearly 1,000 African American and Latino children with asthma residing in Boston, Massachusetts had 80% fewer hospitalizations, 56% fewer emergency department visits and 41% fewer missed school days after participating in a case management program funded by the REACH program. This case management initiative is now being replicated in Alabama, Tennessee and Ohio.

The achievements within the REACH program serve as a model and critical contributor to the CDC “twin approach.” The twin approach requires general population-wide interventions (such as the Partnerships to Improve Community Health grants) coupled with targeted interventions to address the greatest burden of disease and prevent widening of racial and ethnic health disparities. REACH complements CDC’s population-based programs by providing a strategic focus on social determinants of racial and ethnic health disparities in populations with a disproportionate burden of disease, and on communities experiencing the poorest health outcomes. We recommend continued funding for the REACH program to build on the growing evidence base of community-based approaches to eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities. Preventing health disparities and chronic diseases yields considerable medium and long-term savings to our nation’s growing health care costs.

We thank you for your leadership, and look forward to your continued support. Please contact Priscilla Huang (phuang@apiahf.org) or Robyn Gougelet (rgougelet@tfah.org) with any questions.

Sincerely,

National organizations

9 to 5

Action for Healthy Kids

AIDS Alliance for Women, Infants, Children, Youth & Families

Alliance for a Just Society

American Association of Birth Centers

American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy

American Association on Health and Disability

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

American Diabetes Association

Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum

Asian & Pacific Islander Caucus for Public Health

Asian & Pacific Islander National Cancer Survivors Network

Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy and Leadership

Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations

Association of Black Cardiologists

Boat People SOS

Breast Cancer Action

Chroma Health Solutions
CommonHealth ACTION
Community Catalyst
Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement
Dignity Health
Equality Federation
Family Equality Council
Forward Together
FSM Department of Health and Social Affairs
Health Resources in Action
Hepatitis Foundation International
HIV Prevention Justice Alliance
Institute of Social Medicine & Community Health
Jehovah Shalom
Khmer Health Advocates
Lakeshore Foundation
Latino Equality Alliance
Main Street Alliance
Marriage Equality USA
Mashariki Foundation
MESA Public Health Associates
NAACP
National African American Tobacco Prevention Network, Inc.
National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association
National Asian Pacific American Families Against Substance Abuse
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Baptist Convention USA, Inc.
National Black Women's HIV/AIDS Network, Inc.
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Council of Asian Pacific Islander Physicians
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of La Raza
National Federation of Filipino American Associations
National Health Law Program
National Immigration Law Center
National Korean American Service and Education Consortium
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Tongan American Society
National Urban League
National Viral Hepatitis Roundtable
PFLAG National
Prevention Institute
Prevention Partners
PCI - Project Concern International
Pride at Work, AFL-CIO

PS/MS 218
Public Health Institute
Saath USA
Samoan National Nurses Association
Seneca Nation
Sonoma County Asthma Coalition
South Asian Public Health Association
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
Southwest Center for Health Innovation
Summit Health Institute for Research and Education, Inc.
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Tongan American Youth Foundation
Trust for America's Health
United Sikhs
Veggiecation
Wholesome Wave
WhyHunger
Wilson-Stronks Improving Healthcare
YMCA of the USA

State, Territorial and U.S. Affiliated Pacific Island organizations

American Samoa

American Samoa Community Cancer Coalition

Arizona

Asian Pacific Community In Action
Chinle Comprehensive Health Center -- Indian Health Service
Japanese American Citizens League, Arizona Chapter

California

Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles
Asian and Pacific Islander Obesity Prevention Alliance
Asian Community Mental Health Services
California Breathing
California Center for Public Health Advocacy
California Center for Rural Policy
California Latinas for Reproductive Justice
City of Hope Medical Center
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles
Community Health for Asian Americans
Community Health Improvement Partners
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities
Families in Good Health
Filipino Community Cancer Collaborative
Long Beach Alliance for Children with Asthma

Operation Samahan, Inc.
PCI ALCANCE
Regional Asthma Management and Prevention
Taulama for Tongans

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
CNMI NCD Alliance

Federated States of Micronesia
Chuuk NCD Coalition
Pohnpei Comprehensive Cancer Control
FSM Department of Health and Social Affairs
REACH-Chuuk - University of Hawaii

Georgia
Center For Pan Asian Community Services, Inc.
Culture Connect, Inc.
Inspire: A Shalom Afterschool Initiative
Morehouse School of Medicine
Vietnamese American Community of Georgia
Vietnamese Marine of Association of Georgia

Guam
TakeCare Insurance Company, Inc.

Hawaii
CHOW Project
Hep Free Hawaii
Hui Malama Ola Na `Oiw
Micronesian Health Advisory Coalition
Na Pu`uwai Native Hawaiian Health Organization

Illinois
AIDS Foundation of Chicago
Asian Health Coalition

Louisiana
MQVN Community Development Corporation

Maryland
Equality Maryland

Massachusetts
Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center
Boston Public Health Commission
Disability Policy Consortium

Mosaic Cultural Complex, Inc.

Michigan

Asian & Pacific Islander American Vote - Michigan
Greater Detroit Area Health Council
Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan
Michigan Consumers for Healthcare
Michigan Universal Health Care Access Network
South Asian American Voices For Impact

Minnesota

Asian Pacific American Community Network (APACOMNet)
Asian Media Access

Mississippi

Boat People SOS-Gulf Coast
Mississippi Center for Justice
My Brother's Keeper, Inc.

Missouri

PROMO

New Mexico

New Mexico Asian Family Center
Southwest Women's Law Center

New York

Adhikaar
Bronx Deliverance Center of Faith Church
Bronx Park East Community Association
Bronx-Westchester Area Health Education Center
Callen-Lorde Community Health Center
Claire Heureuse Community Center, Inc.
Coalition for Asian American Children & Families
Commission on the Public's Health System
CUNY Graduate Center
Fund for Public Health in New York, Inc.
Healthy York Network
Hunger Action Network of New York State
Institute for Family Health
Kalusugan Coalition
Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc.
Leave It Better Foundation
Lehman College, CUNY
Mekong
New Yorkers for Parks

Northern Manhattan Perinatal Partnership, Inc.
Project CHARGE
Public School 43
South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation
SustyQ (Sustainable Queens)
The Institute for Family Health/Bronx Health REACH
The New York Immigration Coalition
Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation

North Carolina

Wester North Carolina AIDS Project

Ohio

Asian Services In Action, Inc.
Asian-American Community Service Council
Cleveland Metropolitan School District
Neighborhood Leadership Institute

Oregon

Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon
Oregon Action
Upstream Public Health
Western States Center

Palau

Kotel A Deurreng

Pennsylvania

Southeast Asian Mutual Assistance Associations Coalition, Inc.

Rhode Island

Center for Southeast Asians

South Carolina

Black Men's Health Initiative

Texas

Asian American Health Coalition dba HOPE Clinic
Lesbian Health Initiative
Light and Salt Association
US Virgin Islands
AABra Group

Virginia

Look Inside/Out

Washington

APICAT for Healthy Communities
Center for MultiCultural Health
Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition
Consejo Counseling & Referral Service
FEEST
Got Green
Healthy King County Coalition
Mary Mahoney Professional Nurses Organization
Seattle Tilth
Statewide Poverty Action Network
The Hope Heart Institute
Urban Food Link
Washington CAN!
YMCA of Greater Seattle

Wisconsin

Fair Wisconsin

Cc: The Honorable Roy Blunt, Chairman, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor,
Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
The Honorable Patty Murray, Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies