



PRESS RELEASE

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National Health Coalition to Include Language Access in ACA Non-Discrimination Efforts

WASHINGTON – After submitting comments on the Nondiscrimination in Health Programs and Activities proposed rule implementing Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), Action for Health Justice (AHJ) released the following statements in support of the rule's provisions addressing discrimination based on national origin, including English proficiency.

"Health care is a universal language, and this proposed rule brings us closer to reaching those who continue to face barriers to accessing health care and coverage due to the languages they speak," said Kathy Ko Chin, president and CEO of the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF). "This rule should be fully implemented and enforced in order to move our communities closer to health equity."

"Federal regulations clarify what health programs must do to provide 'meaningful access' to our communities, especially our limited English speaking community members, and establish further accountability for health programs and agencies," said Doreena Wong, project director of health access of Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Los Angeles (Advancing Justice – LA). "They also provide needed guidance to those who receive federal funds so nobody in our communities will be left behind without health coverage."

"In our member health centers, we see that language assistance services are essential to connecting patients with care," said Jeffrey Caballero, executive director of the Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO). "We look forward to continuing to work with the Office for Civil Rights, AHJ and our other partners to ensure that this rule is implemented, and that Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders and all individuals can truly benefit from the Affordable Care Act."

Comments submitted by Advancing Justice – AAJC, Advancing Justice – LA, APIAHF, and AAPCHO to the Office for Civil Rights at the Department of Health and Human Services can be [found here](#). The AHJ comments support the propose rule and recommend the following:

- Incorporate more comprehensive definitions of qualified interpreters and translators to ensure competent oral interpretation by trained professionals;

- Collect and reporting of data on race, ethnicity, language, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability status, and age by all entities covered under the rule;
- Require that notices and taglines about nondiscrimination and the availability of language assistance are made available in the top 15 languages spoken by individuals with limited English proficiency in each State;
- Require the translation of vital and significant publications and documents into a minimum number of languages based on the service area population;
- Include stronger mechanisms for enforcement of the provisions within the proposed rule.

During the first two open enrollment periods, Action for Health Justice partners worked in 22 states and reached about 850,000 Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AA and NHPI) individuals to provide ACA outreach, education, and enrollment assistance. AHJ partners connected with people in many ways and provided assistance in over 50 languages. Through all interactions, language and immigration status were and continue to be some of the major barriers to enrollment for AA and NHPI communities. These proposed regulations to implement Section 1557 of the ACA are extremely important to insure that limited English proficient individuals and immigrants have access to health insurance coverage through the health insurance marketplaces, as well as access to health care services once they obtain coverage.

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