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Health Center Physician Among Experts to Testify at Congressional Hearing on Rescuing Human Trafficking Victims

Testimony Highlights Need for Shifting Care for Victims from Criminal Justice to Health Care

WASHINGTON – A physician from [Asian Health Services \(AHS\)](#), a member health center of the [Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations \(AAPCHO\)](#), provided testimony to the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe yesterday, in a congressional hearing on identifying and rescuing human trafficking victims. One-third of trafficked persons in the country are Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, comprising the largest group of people trafficked into the United States. The testimony presented highlights how health centers are essential in identifying and providing care for these and other populations at risk of being trafficked.

“Each trafficked patient requires care specific to their culture, migration and complex trauma experiences,” Dr. Kimberly Chang, AHS physician who testified at the hearing, said. “Community health centers are essential in providing care for these individuals as they excel at cultural competency, and are uniquely positioned to identify patients who are victims and provide continuity of care for those exploited.” Dr. Chang provided the following recommendations in her testimony:

- Create funding opportunities to strengthen the health care system response to trafficking through prevention programs and comprehensive health services in Federally Qualified Health Centers.
- Promote and fund incorporating health considerations for human trafficking across sectors, including law enforcement and criminal justice. Create and implement rules to incorporate health and trauma-informed care training across all systems that engage with human trafficking victims.
- Ensure that there is language and cultural competence accessibility for victims throughout all systems that engage with human trafficking victims (e.g., justice, health care, law enforcement, immigration, social services, homeland security).
- Fund enabling services (non-clinical services that help patients access care) essential in the health care system response to human trafficking. Health centers typically provide enabling services as part of their care model but these services are not reimbursed through health care payment models.

Since the Trafficking Victims Protection Act first passed Congress in 2000, and was recently reauthorized in 2013, there has been growing recognition that human trafficking is a health issue. Recent research shows that over 80 percent of trafficked victims have contact with health care providers, and over 50 percent have treatment in a clinic setting while in captivity. In this way, health centers and other primary care providers can play a critical role in identifying human trafficking victims within clinical settings.

“Human trafficking affects the most vulnerable in our communities including immigrants, refugees, and others in poor and unstable living situations—the very people served by our member health centers,” said Jeffrey Caballero, executive director of AAPCHO. “We hope that this testimony helps to shed light on this growing epidemic, and that policymakers will provide health centers with additional resources to continue to care for patients who have been trafficked and to prevent others from becoming victims.”

#MORE#

A copy of Dr. Chang's testimony is available at <http://csce.gov>. More information about the key role of health centers and the importance of identifying victims of human trafficking in clinical settings is available on AAPCHO's website at <http://bit.ly/1PVbOPx>.

About AHS

AHS is a community health center in Oakland, California, that offers primary health care and dental services, serving over 24,000 patients and over 105,000 patient visits annually. Our mission is to serve and advocate for the medically underserved, including the immigrant and refugee Asian community, and to assure equal access to health care services regardless of income, insurance status, language, or culture. For more information on AHS, please visit www.asianhealthservices.org.

About AAPCHO

AAPCHO is a national association of 35 community health organizations dedicated to promoting advocacy, collaboration and leadership that improves the health status and access of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders in the United States. For more information on AAPCHO, please visit www.aapcho.org.

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