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AAPCHO Applauds Bipartisan Action To Overhaul Immigration Process

OAKLAND, January 29, 2013 – The Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO) applauds President Obama’s remarks today to fix the nation’s immigration system. President Obama’s remarks come on the heels of a bipartisan Senate agreement to overhaul immigration laws.

Although the details of the president’s blueprint and the Senate’s proposal remain to be negotiated in the coming weeks, this bipartisan move marks the most significant breakthrough in recent years to address the nation’s immigration laws.

“We are pleased that the administration and Congress are taking positive first steps to tackle a crucial issue affecting many of our country’s new American immigrants,” said Jeffrey Caballero, executive director of AAPCHO and attendee at Obama’s Las Vegas press conference. “We know that essential details still need to be fleshed out, but we are encouraged by this bipartisan move toward an immigration system that creates a path to citizenship for aspiring new Americans already contributing to the growth and prosperity of this country.”

Immigration legislation will have a substantial impact on the Asian American, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander community (AA&NHOP). AA&NHOPs have long suffered from visa backlogs that keep this population’s families separated. Fifty-four percent of Asian Americans indicate that visa backlogs is a significant problem for their families, with 38 percent indicating that it is a “very serious” or “fairly serious” problem. Legislation will also affect Pacific Islanders living in the U.S. and freely associated states.

While the renewed attention to fix the immigration system is welcome, AAPCHO hopes that proposed legislation addresses the need to expand access to health care coverage to immigrants. Immigrants who are forced to use emergency room care cost federal and state governments billions in uncompensated care annually. Immigration reform that includes access to preventive care would lower long-term health care costs and strengthen the social safety net overall.

“Our current immigration system does not recognize the realities or opportunities presented by our changing and increasingly diverse nation,” Mr. Caballero stated, adding, “As an organization serving the fast growing AA&NHOP community, AAPCHO will continue to work with our partners, the administration, and Congress to ensure meaningful changes in immigration legislation and the integration of health issues that will benefit public health overall.”

As a national not-for-profit association of 29 community-based health organizations, AAPCHO has long advocated for legislation that builds the American economy and strengthens American families, including medically underserved AA&NHOPs. The organization commends President Obama for prioritizing immigration reform, and looks forward to advancing comprehensive immigration legislation that reflects the American values of fairness and equality by eliminating barriers to affordable quality health care.

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About AAPCHO

AAPCHO is a national association of 29 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 U.S. For more information on AAPCHO and its Guiding Principles and Values, please visit www.aapcho.org. AAPCHO can also be found on Facebook (www.facebook.com/aapcho), Twitter (@aapchotweets), and YouTube (www.youtube.com/aapcho).

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