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AAPCHO Delivers Over 2,000 Petitions to Senate Calling for Immigrant Health Rights

Community Health Advocates Express Disappointment in Corker-Hoeven Amendment to Senate Immigration Bill

Washington, D.C., June 24, 2013 – Today, the Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO) delivered over 2,000 petition signatures to Senate offices asserting the right to health care for aspiring citizens. The petitions come just hours before the Senate is expected to vote on the Corker-Hoeven amendment, which fundamentally alters the Senate immigration bill.

AAPCHO and its member community health centers expressed concern that the amendment, which was filed last Friday shortly before Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid called for today's cloture vote, fails to fully address the health needs of lawfully present immigrants. The Corker-Hoeven amendment calls for increased border security, including 700 miles of additional border fencing, adding an estimated \$30 billion to the overall cost of the immigration proposal. In addition, the amendment instructs the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Treasury to alter the definition of the legal term "lawfully present," to arbitrarily remove certain visa holders from HHS health programs, including programs for pregnant women and children, as well as opportunities to purchase health insurance under the Affordable Care Act. The vague language in the amendment does not specify which HHS "health programs" are impacted, making it unclear what impact these changes would have on community health centers and the patients they serve.

AAPCHO and its members also expressed disappointment that Senator Reid's call for today's cloture vote cuts off debate before Senator Mazie Hirono's "Taxpayer Fairness" amendment could be brought to the floor. This common-sense amendment sought to ensure that any lawfully present individual, working and paying federal taxes to fund federal programs, remained eligible for those programs regardless of their immigration status. This amendment would have strengthened the Senate immigration bill by acknowledging the Congressional Budget Office's report that found that immigrants contribute billions in taxes, and are expected to help grow our economy over the next few decades, by removing unfair exclusions from basic health programs, such as Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program, and the Affordable Care Act.

"AAPCHO members and our patients believe all lawfully present immigrants deserve access to quality and affordable health care," stated Jeff Caballero, AAPCHO executive director. "So this morning, AAPCHO sought to remind members of the Senate before their vote: denying basic primary and preventive health care to anyone, is morally wrong and bad public policy"

In total, 2,450 petitions collected from patients, providers, and community members, in nine different Asian and Pacific Islander languages, including Chinese, Korean, Tagalog, Hindi, Vietnamese, Kosraean, Burmese, Samoan and Khmer, were delivered to Senate leaders.

The Corker-Hoeven Amendment is a tough compromise to guarantee a pathway to citizenship for aspiring Americans and AAPCHO pledges to continue to fight for improvements to protect the rights, health, and well-being of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander and other communities.

About AAPCHO

AAPCHO is a national association of 33 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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