



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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AAPCHO Applauds Passage of Senate Bipartisan Opioids Package

WASHINGTON – The Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO) today released the following statement, commending the Senate’s passage of sweeping legislation to combat the national opioid epidemic. The Senate overwhelmingly passed the bipartisan Opioid Crisis Response Act of 2018 (S. 2680) by a vote of 99-1 on Monday evening. The bill includes provisions to support treatment and prevention programs for opioid use-related infectious diseases among high-risk populations.

“We applaud the Senate for taking this important step towards providing relief for families and communities affected by this ongoing public health crisis,” said Jeffrey Caballero, executive director of AAPCHO. “We urge Congress to move quickly to pass this legislation and to ensure that essential funding is included to address hepatitis B and other infectious diseases within the national opioid epidemic.”

The bill, comprised of several pieces of legislation related to addressing the opioid epidemic, contains the Eliminating Opioid Related Infectious Diseases Act of 2018, which authorizes \$40 million annually for five years for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to address infections associated with injection drug use such as HIV, infective endocarditis, and viral hepatitis, including hepatitis B and C.

The bipartisan Eliminating Opioid Related Infectious Diseases Act of 2018 was originally introduced in the Senate by Senators Todd Young (R-IN), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), and Edward Markey (D-MA), and is similar to the bill originally introduced in the House by Representatives Lance Leonard (R-NJ) and Joseph Kennedy III (D-MA), which passed the House earlier this summer, and was then included in the larger opioids bill that has now passed the Senate.

These pieces of legislation on the infectious disease consequences of the opioid epidemic were developed in response to the acute rise in new cases of hepatitis B, which has increased up to 100-400 percent in states such as Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia and Maine, and hepatitis C, which has increased up to 350 percent in the setting of the opioid epidemic.

The differences in the package of opioids bills in the House and Senate must now be reconciled and merged into a single combined bill in conference before this bill can be sent to the president to be signed into law.

AAPCHO urges Congress to move quickly to conference the opioids legislation and to send it to the president for his signature before the end of this year. Further, AAPCHO urges Congress to include necessary funding in the FY 2019 appropriations bill for the CDC to address the infectious disease consequences of the opioid epidemic, including addressing the acute rise in hepatitis B and C, which has been authorized by this bill.

About AAPCHO

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

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