August 6, 2020

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader McCarthy, and Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA) and our thirty seven member organizations, we are writing to implore the Senate and House of Representatives to work together to provide relief to all communities that have been most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to the devastating loss of life and ongoing threat to our health and well-being, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a tremendous negative impact on our economy. As leaders of the U.S. Congress, the future of our country’s resilience depends on your ability to act swiftly and decisively.

This impact of the pandemic is being felt hardest in low-income communities and on low-income workers -- especially Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities. These communities make up the backbone of our cities and communities, and must be a central focus of any effective strategy to rebuild and recover across all levels of the economy. Our country asks these communities to provide services such as health care, food and supply delivery, clean our facilities, provide domestic work and transit options moving, and yet, to date not enough has been done to meet their basic human needs, including adequate health care coverage, stable housing, sufficient income, worker protections, and economic opportunities.

With the HEROES Act, the House of Representatives responded boldly and courageously to the threat that the pandemic poses to our economy and our communities. Time is of the essence, and provisions in the HEROES Act are directly needed in this moment. We urge Congressional leadership to use the House-passed
HEROES Act as a starting point to address the priorities outlined in this letter that are most important to Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities.

The National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA) is a coalition of 37 national AAPI organizations. Many of our member organizations have their own networks of chapters and affiliates across the country. In this context, we ask that the following policies must be essential minimums to the next coronavirus recovery act that the Senate passes and that is signed into law:

**Housing and Economic Justice**

- *Housing Assistance:* Provide $100 billion for emergency rental assistance to help tenants pay their rent and utility bills and expansion of the eviction moratorium in the CARES Act to all renters. Provide $75 billion to address the needs of homeowners struggling to make their monthly payments by providing direct assistance with mortgage payments, property taxes, utilities, and other related homeownership costs and expand the foreclosure moratorium in the CARES Act to all homeowners.

- *Worker Protections:* Mandate the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to issue an enforceable standard that covers all workers from COVID-19 and other infectious diseases. Require the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to track and investigate work-related COVID-19 infections and make recommendations on needed actions or guidance to protect such employees. Require OSHA to forbid employers from retaliating against workers for reporting infection control problems to their employer, any public authority, to the media or on a social media platform.

- *Essential Worker Benefits and Compensation:* Provide hero/premium pay and child care benefits for a broad range of essential workers regardless of immigration status to properly compensate them for their risk and ensure they can keep coming to work.

- *Expanded Access to Emergency Paid Family, Medical, and Sick Leave:* Eliminate exemptions that prevent health care workers, first responders, workers at businesses with fewer than 50 employees, and workers at businesses with 500 or more employees from accessing emergency paid leave.

- *Extended Unemployment Insurance Benefits:* Extend the $600 weekly unemployment benefit from the end of July 2020 to January 2021. The Senate must take additional steps to address the unemployment crisis.

- *Support for Small Businesses and Nonprofits:* Provide $2 billion to the Community Development Financial Institutions (“CDFI”) Fund, of which $800
million would be set aside for minority-owned lenders, to support small businesses, minority-owned businesses, and underserved communities and includes a temporary moratorium on small business and nonprofit debt collection. Remove employee caps under the Paycheck Protection Program for nonprofit health care institutions and community health centers that employ more than 500 employees.

- **Consumer Protections:** Enact essential consumer protections, including a temporary suspension of negative credit reporting; a permanent ban of credit reporting of COVID-19 related medical debt; partial debt relief for student loans; and a temporary moratorium on consumer debt collection.

- **Corporate Accountability:** Oppose proposals that grant schools, businesses and health care providers immunity from liability for coronavirus-related harms to workers and consumers caused by the businesses’ own negligence.

- **Reinvestment in Communities:** Reprioritize resources additionally allocated for law enforcement to instead invest in people and communities, including health and water systems, housing, and direct support for struggling families and people returning from prison.

- **Fiscal Relief for State, Local, and Tribal Governments, including DC and U.S. Territories:** Assist with the fiscal impacts from this public health emergency by providing $500 billion to state governments, $375 billion to local governments, $20 billion to tribal governments, $20 billion to governments of the Territories, and $775 million to the District of Columbia. Build on the successes of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act by further increasing the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) to 14 percent, as requested by the National Governors Association, to ensure that states can continue to protect health coverage for their most vulnerable and underserved residents during the pandemic.

**Immigration**

- **Economic Relief:** Extend CARES Act cash payments to taxpayers who file with Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (ITINs) and mixed-status families.

- **Immigrant Workers:** Extend work permits for TPS holders for at least 18 months, and for DACA-mented workers for at least 2 years. Extend immigrant visas and other forms of temporary immigration status. Additionally, automatically extend other forms of work authorization for noncitizens during the duration of the declaration of a national health emergency.

- **Preserving Immigrant Visas:** Rollover the unused family, diversity and employment-based visas from FY2020 into FY2021 and FY2022.
● **Preventing the International Spread of COVID-19:** Require that DHS suspend all deportations for individuals from countries with travel restrictions from the United States.

● **Protecting Immigrant Communities:** Ensure that DHS suspends all immigration enforcement during the course of the pandemic including halting transfers of people from federal, state or local criminal custody to ICE custody. Require ICE and CBP to use all available discretionary powers to release all immigrants possible from detention utilizing humanitarian parole, release on recognizance, and including provisions allowing for release notwithstanding other provisions of law. Suspend all check-ins, including in-person and alternative check-in methods.

### Health

● **Immigrant Access to Care:** Restore Medicaid eligibility for COFA communities and ensure that immigrants who would be eligible for Medicaid but for their immigration status are able to access testing and treatment for COVID-19. Eliminate immigration restrictions on eligibility for health programs by passing Title IV of the Health Equity and Accountability Act and the HEAL for Immigrant Women and Families Act.

● **Support for Community Health Centers:** Build on the successes of the CARES Act and other COVID-19 relief legislation by providing an additional $7.6 billion for community health centers that are critical health access providers for underserved communities. Expand health centers’ ability to provide telehealth services to patients by enabling them to permanently serve as distant sites and obtain reimbursement at Medicare PPS rates. Telehealth provisions should also remove geographic restrictions of originating sites and makes the home an eligible originating site.

● **Language Access:** Support organizations that are trusted community messengers and that materials related to pandemic are accessible to all individuals regardless of language and communications needs. Specifically, the legislation should:

1. Require that all materials related to the pandemic are provided, in a timely way, in at least 39 written languages and American Sign Language (ASL), as recommended in the DHS Language Access Plan, and in alternative formats such as large font print, electronic formats, Braille, fully accessible websites, and captioned and ASL videos.
2. Address in-person communications needs, particularly at COVID-19 testing and treatment sites, including hospitals, by ensuring funding for and access to qualified interpretation services, support persons, communications boards, and other augmentative communication tools.
3. Require that contact tracing efforts, both through trained staff and digital applications, are fully available to people with diverse communications needs and that contact tracers have access to interpreters and are trained in how to work with them.
4. Ensure that all patients are aware of their rights under civil rights laws, as well as how to file complaints, and that covered entities are aware of their responsibilities to ensure effective communication with all patients during the pandemic.

Education

- **Education funding:** The HEROES Act includes over $100 billion in emergency funding for K-12 and postsecondary education. At a minimum, we urge Congress to consider the HEROES Act stabilization funds in the next relief package so that all students, including AAPI students and other students of color, immigrant students, and low-income students, can continue to learn while prioritizing safety during the pandemic.

- **Extension of student loan relief:** Extend student loan assistance under the CARES Act, which expires July 31, 2020, until September 30, 2021. Additionally, expand relief to student borrowers who were previously ineligible for relief.

- **No restrictions on emergency funding eligibility:** Emergency funding must not be contingent on schools reopening for in-person classes.

Civil Rights

- **Hate Crimes:** Address the surge in hate crimes, harassment, and discrimination arising out of misplaced blame for the COVID-19 pandemic, by incorporating the Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act to provide incentives for hate crime reporting, provide grants for State-run hate crime hotlines, and establish alternative sentencing for individuals convicted under the Matthew Shephard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act.

- **Language Access:** Across all the programs and actions included in any legislation, it is essential that there be outreach and materials available in multiple AANHPI languages.

- **Data Disaggregation:** Make comprehensive data available through the collection and regular reporting of race, ethnicity, primary language, and disability characteristics of COVID-19 cases and deaths at all testing, treatment, and ultimately vaccination sites, including from institutional entities. Legislation should further provide for systemic reforms in health disparities data collection,
analysis and reporting by passing Title I of the Health Equity and Accountability Act.

- **Support a Fair and Accurate Census:** Allocate at least $400 million to help ensure a successful 2020 Census amidst significant challenges and extend the statutory deadlines for the delivery of reapportionment and redistricting data.

- **Protect the Voting Rights of all Americans:** Allocate at least $3.6 billion in additional funding so states can administer this year’s elections in a safe, fair, and accessible manner through the implementation of vote-by-mail and the expansion of early voting and in-person voting options. Ensure that every voter can access no-excuse absentee ballots with prepaid postage in all federal elections, prohibit states from requiring notarization or witness signatures to cast an absentee ballot, and require states to automatically mail absentee ballots to all registered voters no later than two weeks before Election Day.

- **Fiscal Relief for the U.S. Postal Service:** Address the financial solvency of USPS and ensure Americans nationwide can fulfill their democratic duties to be counted in the 2020 Census and vote in upcoming primary and general elections by providing $25 billion in emergency appropriations.

As our communities suffer from the impact of the coronavirus, we implore Congress to ensure that these priorities are included in any COVID-19 relief measures. Furthermore, while the HEROES Act is a critical starting point for discussion to help our country recover from the pandemic’s widespread effects, we also stand with the many others who are still excluded from urgently needed support. This particularly includes immigrants with convictions who still have no guaranteed release from ICE detention and those who lack access to testing and treatment coverage because of their immigration status. We must stop dividing immigrants into those who are "deserving" or "undeserving" of support. We call on Congress to recognize the humanity of all people and urge the Senate to build on the momentum of the HEROES Act. This will not only benefit AANHPI communities, amongst many others, including communities of color, but will also shore up our nation’s overall economy and improve our economic health into the future. Future generations will judge us on how boldly and courageously we act now. Please contact NCAPA’s National Director, Gregg Orton (gregg@ncapaonline.org) with any questions, concerns, or necessary follow up.

Sincerely,

National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)
A. Philip Randolph Institute
Adhikaar
Alianza Nacional de Campesinas
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
American Samoa Society of Washington, D.C.
APAPA.org
Apna Ghar, Inc.
Arkansas Coalition of Marshallese
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Asian American Arts Alliance
Asian American Executive Network
Asian American Federation
Asian American Federation of Florida
Asian American Resource Workshop
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Chicago
Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote
Asian and Pacific Islander Queers United for Action DC
Asian Community Development Corporation
Asian community development council
Asian Counseling and Referral Service
Asian Democrats Central Texas
Asian Law Alliance
Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO
Asian Pacific Islander Coalition of Washington
Asian Pacific Islander Coalition-Yakima Valley, WA
Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy and Leadership (APPEAL)
Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO)
BPSOS Center for Community Advancement
Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association
Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association of Greater Lowell, Inc.
CANN-A (COFA Alliance National Network - Arizona)
Chinese Culture Connection, Inc.
Chinese Progressive Association, Boston
Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC)
Chuuk Christian Church of Arizona
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
COFA Alliance National Network of Washington
COFA-Community Leadership and Advocacy Network
CPACS
Dept. of History, Santa Monica College
Division of Ethnic Studies, University of Utah
ELEVATE AAPI @ Irvine Valley College
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)
Farmworker Association of Florida
FASTER - Filipino Americans in Science Technology Engineering Arts and Mathematics
Filipinx Progressive Caucus of San Francisco
Florida Asian Services
Florida Asian Women Alliance
Gary N Okamoto and Ryoko Okamoto Family Trust
Greater Malden Asian American Community Coalition (GMAACC)
Guam Preservation Trust
Hawaii's Daughters Guild of California
Hawaiian Inter Club Council of Southern California
Hmong Association Inc.
India Home, Inc.
Indian Horizon of Florida
Japanese American Citizens League
Japanese American Citizens League Philadelphia Chapter
Japanese American Citizens League, Twin Cities Chapter
JP Design Co.
Kaha i ka Panoa Kaleponi Hawaiian Civic Club
Korea Law Center
Laotian American National Alliance
LE GaFa Leadership and Education through Gagana Fa’a Samoa
Legal Aid at Work
MALO Motivating Action Leadership Opportunity
Marshallese Educational Initiative
Marshallese Youth of Orange County
Mi Familia Vota
NaFFAA
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)
National CAPACD
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)
National Network for Immigrant & Refugee Rights
National Pacific Islander Covid 19 Response Team
National Pacific Islander Education Network
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance
Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander Hawai'i COVID19 Response, Recovery, Resiliency TEAM
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Alliance
NC Counts Coalition/Cumberland County
North Carolina Asian Americans Together (NCAAT)
OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates Greater Cleveland Chapter
OCA Asian Pacific Advocates - Greater Seattle
OCA Asian Pacific Islander American Advocates Utah
OCA Detroit-Assoc. of Chinese Americans, Inc.
OCA Greater Chicago
OCA South Florida Chapter
OCA-Asian Pacific American Advocates
OCAPICA
Olympia Chapter, Pacific NW District, JACL
One APIA Nevada
Ong and Associates
OPAWL - Building AAPI Feminist Leadership in Ohio
Pacific American Community Cultural Center
Pacific Islander Community Association of WA
Pacific Islander Health Board of WA
Pacific Islander Health Partnership
Pacific Islander Studies Research Group, UCLA
Papa Ola Lokahi
Pasifika Community Discussions
Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center
People of Coloring
Philippine Study Group of Minnesota (PSGM)
PIVOT (Progressive Vietnamese American Organization)
Robert G Gish Consultants LLC
SAAHAS For Cause
Second Samoan Congregational Church UCC
SEE-LA
SEIUHCMN
Services, Immigrant Rights and Education Network (SIREN)
Snake River JACL
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)
South Asian Workers Center-Boston
Southeast Asian Resource Action Center
Southern California Pacific Islander COVID-19 Response Team
Tafesilafai
Tarrant County Central Labor Council AFL-CIO
TASH
Taulama for Tongans
Thai Community Development Center
The AAPI COVID-19 Project
The Asian & Latino Coalition
The Center for Asian Pacific American Women (CAPAW)
Tyflux
U.T.O.P.I.A. Seattle (United Territories of Pacific Islanders Alliance of Seattle, WA
UC Berkeley
UCLA
UCLA Asian American Studies Center
UNAVSA
United Chinese Americans UCA Illinois Chapter
Utah Pacific Islander Civic Engagement Coalition
Viet Rainbow of Orange County
VietLead-Urban Affairs Coalition
Vietnamese American Initiative for Development, Inc.
Vision Board