

ADVANCING ASIAN AMERICAN HEALTH THROUGH REFORM

Health disparities persist in the Asian American community without any regard to the “model minority” myth that persuades people, inside and outside of the community, otherwise. *Issues of language, culture, affordability, and restrictions on legal immigrants* impose major barriers to effective health care for the Asian American community. Over 33% of Asian Americans have limited English proficiency and 63% are foreign born.ⁱ Moreover, high rates of Hepatitis B, childhood obesity, and breast cancer mortality continue to impact this community.ⁱⁱ

The Asian American Justice Center strongly supports health care reform efforts. Congress is on its way to providing a health care system that will contain costs and, thus, provide affordable health coverage to many that cannot afford it now. *For health care reform to fully address the needs of the Asian American community, however, such legislation must address several key areas.*

Removal of the Five-Year Bar

- Eliminate the 5-year waiting period imposed on legal immigrants applying for Medicaid.
- Ensure that a state no longer has the option of imposing a waiting period on legal immigrants applying for the state’s Children’s Health Insurance Program.

Equal Treatment in Receiving Health Coverage Subsidies

- Current proposals to provide subsidies/credits to ensure that low- and moderate-income individuals can afford health insurance should not include any waiting periods for legal immigrants and should treat legal immigrants equitably in all other regards.

Coverage for All Children and Pregnant Women

- Health reform must provide comprehensive and affordable health coverage for all children and pregnant women regardless of status.

A Robust Public Health Insurance Option

- Health reform should include a strong public health insurance option to ensure that low- and moderate-income individuals and small businesses have access to cost-contained, quality care.

The health reform efforts that are taking place now offer the best opportunity to mitigate the racial and ethnic health disparities that are conspicuous in health care. With representatives in Congress that understand the needs of our community and many others like it, we have the opportunity to not only ensure the best future health outcomes of these communities, but to improve the overall effectiveness of the health care system.

For more information, please contact Alice Dong, Health Law Policy Staff Attorney, Asian American Justice Center, at adong@advancingequality.org.

ⁱ ASIAN AMERICAN JUSTICE CENTER AND ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN LEGAL CENTER, A COMMUNITY OF CONTRASTS: ASIAN AMERICANS AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS IN THE UNITED STATES 3, 13 (2006).

ⁱⁱ ASIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES AND HEALTH : CONTEXT, RESEARCH, POLICY AND ACTION 114, 137, 142 (Chau Trinh-Shevrin, Nadia Shilpi Islam, and Mariano Jose Rey eds., 2009).