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April 10, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Michael R. Pence
Vice President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump and Vice President Pence:

As Members of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), we write to urge the Administration to ensure that limited English proficient (LEP) Americans, including the millions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) that we represent, have equal access to federal programs, materials, and resources pertaining to COVID-19.

The threat to public health posed by the COVID-19 crisis has necessitated an unprecedented, whole-of-government response to meet the urgent needs of American workers, families, and businesses. This includes the enactment of three emergency relief packages that include critical funding for public health, research, and testing; unemployment insurance; direct payments to workers and families; nutrition assistance; and loans for both big and small businesses.

Despite the tremendous measures that have been taken to address the current pandemic, we are concerned that our federal response efforts have largely neglected the needs of LEP persons who are uniquely vulnerable during this public health crisis. This is especially true for the diverse Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) population, over one third of whom are LEP and many of whom have difficulty accessing federal resources without proper translation services and accommodations.

As your Administration continues to implement critical response measures related to COVID-19, we urge you to follow existing guidelines under Executive Order 13166, "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency," to ensure federally conducted programs and activities are accessible to everyone living in the United States regardless of their English proficiency. This Executive Order builds on civil rights protections provided in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and aims to protect LEP persons from discrimination by ensuring that all Americans have meaningful access to the information and services that federal agencies provide. Unfortunately, the Executive Order has not been implemented uniformly across the federal government, which has made it difficult for LEP individuals to access critical resources provided by certain agencies.

Although we appreciate that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently added Korean and Vietnamese translations to their website to complement existing resources already available in English, Spanish, and simplified Chinese, we know that significant language barriers persist for millions of AAPIs. To date, many of the publicly available materials and resources related to the implementation of the three coronavirus relief packages enacted last month are only available in English and limited Spanish. In addition, many of the resources your Administration has independently released – including the White House Coronavirus Task Force’s “Coronavirus Guidelines for America,” as well as critical coronavirus updates and information on Coronavirus.gov and FEMA.gov – are likewise only available in English and Spanish.

In order to ensure all Americans have equal access to publicly available coronavirus resources, updates, and materials, we urge you to make translated materials available on all official federal websites that have information related to COVID-19 and any of the benefits programs created to address this pandemic. Furthermore, we request that these materials be translated, at minimum, into the languages described as most encountered in the FEMA Language Access Plan for Disaster Assistance: Spanish, Arabic, Cambodian, Chinese, Haitian Creole, French, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Russian, Tagalog, Urdu, Vietnamese, Greek, Polish, Thai, Portuguese, and American Sign Language. Doing so will provide over 25 million LEP Americans with the resources they need to slow the spread of COVID-19 and help stabilize the American economy.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for working with us to ensure that all Americans have access to vital federal resources during this difficult time.

Sincerely,



Judy Chu
Member of Congress
CAPAC Chair



Mazie K. Hirono
U.S. Senator



Grace Meng
Member of Congress
CAPAC First Vice Chair

/s/ Mark Takano

Mark Takano
Member of Congress
CAPAC Second Vice Chair

/s/ Ted W. Lieu

Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress
CAPAC Whip

/s/ Andy Kim

Andy Kim
Member of Congress
CAPAC Freshman Representative

/s/ Ed Case

Ed Case
Member of Congress

/s/ Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.

Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/ TJ Cox

TJ Cox
Member of Congress

/s/ Tulsi Gabbard
Tulsi Gabbard
Member of Congress

/s/ Al Green
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Member of Congress

/s/ Pramila Jayapal
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/s/ Ro Khanna
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/s/ Linda T. Sánchez
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/s/ Adam Smith
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/s/ Nydia M. Velázquez
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