



February 11, 2021

The Honorable Frank Pallone Jr.
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone,

On behalf of the Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO), I write in support of the Energy and Commerce Committee's COVID-19 relief budget reconciliation legislation. The Committee's reconciliation proposal is a vital down payment on what is needed to address the COVID-19 crisis and direct critical funding to health care providers and community-based organizations that provide care to medically underserved communities. We applaud the Committee's provisions to provide critical investments to bolster community health centers, expand the public health workforce, invest in frontline community-based organizations, expand health care coverage, and aid ailing state and local governments.

AAPCHO is a national nonprofit association of 34 community-based health care organizations, 29 of which are Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), that advocates for the diverse health needs of medically underserved Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders and the community health providers that serve their needs. AAPCHO's members are critical health access providers to nearly three quarter of a million vulnerable and low-income patients, providing culturally and linguistically appropriate care that has been vital to supporting AA, NH, and PI communities through the COVID-19 crisis and every day.

AAPCHO applauds the Committee's allocation of \$7.6 billion for community health centers, including \$20 million for Native Hawaiian Health Centers, \$800 million for the National Health Services Corps, \$200 million for the Nurse Corps Loan Repayment Program, and \$330 million for the Teaching Health Center program. As you know, Community health centers are trusted health care providers to nearly 30 million patients—1 in 12 people in the U.S.—in predominately low-income and communities of color that have been hit hard by COVID-19. Health centers have adapted to the crisis, yet they are strained by revenue shortfalls, workforce capacity constraints, and limited access to COVID-19 supplies and vaccines. The Committee's allocation will help health centers keep their doors open, support the public health workforce they rely on, and enable them to continue providing high quality care to their patients that is culturally appropriate and in their preferred language.

We are also encouraged the Committee has incorporated provisions of the *COVID Community Care Act* to provide direct support for community-based organizations that have been vital reaching underserved communities. Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders

have been hard hit with high rates of infection and mortality, with Asian Americans having the highest risk of hospitalization and death among race/ethnic groups and Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders having the highest confirmed rates of COVID-19 in the 21 states that disaggregate NHPI data. CBOs are on the frontlines providing culturally responsive and multilingual direct service and outreach to their communities and will be crucial to strengthening vaccine confidence. We appreciate the Committee providing needed support for CBOs so they will continue to play this critical role.

Further, we are supportive of the Committee's work to expand health care coverage through the ACA marketplace and Medicaid and providing much needed aid to state and local governments. It is imperative that in the middle of this public health crisis, everyone is able to access the health care they need and that states are not forced to cut needed health programs.

AAPCHO commends you for your leadership to improve health care access for the hard-hit and vulnerable communities our members serve. This is an important legislation to respond to the most pressing needs of the pandemic, and we look forward to working with you on additional legislation as our country recovers from the COVID-19 crisis. We support the Committee's COVID-19 relief budget reconciliation legislation and urge Congress to enact these health provisions without delay.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Adam P. Carbullido". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Adam P. Carbullido
Director of Policy and Advocacy