



April 2, 2020

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Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, AFL-CIO
Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy & Leadership
Asian Real Estate Association of America
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National Asian Pacific American Bar Association
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National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum
National Asian Pacific Center on Aging
National Association of Asian American Professionals*
National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development
National Council of Asian Pacific Islander Physicians
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National Korean American Service & Education Consortium
National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance
OCA – Asian Pacific American Advocates Payu-ta, Inc.
Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund
South Asian Americans Leading Together
South Asian Bar Association of North America
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center

National Governors Association
444 N. Capitol St. NW, Suite. 267
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear National Governors Association:

On behalf of the Center for American Progress and The National Council of Asian Pacific Americans, a coalition of 35 of the largest Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) civil rights organizations, we write to request your commitment to addressing the surge of anti-Asian hate incidents that has occurred in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The rapid spread of misinformation and stigmatization is terrorizing communities, undermining virus control efforts, and making Asian Americans and Asian immigrants less safe.

In the weeks following the coronavirus outbreak, many news organizations and public officials associated the virus with people of Asian descent. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warned that this could cause stigma against Asian Americans and Asian immigrants, and result in social avoidance or rejection; denials of healthcare, education, housing, or employment; and even physical violence.¹ These warnings have borne out in recent weeks, with an increasing number of Asian Americans and Asian immigrants experiencing harassment, assault, and discrimination in connection to COVID-19. For example, in San Fernando, an assault fueled by COVID-19 related hysteria sent a 16-year old Asian American boy to the hospital.² In New York City, a man physically attacked an Asian American woman, yelling coronavirus-related slurs.³ In Plymouth, Indiana, hotel staff discriminated against two Hmong men, refusing to provide them with a room after suggesting the men had coronavirus.⁴ According to the Stop AAPI Hate website⁵, which began compiling incidents of Asian discrimination, there have been 650 separate incidents since March 18th alone.⁶ These incidents will only continue to grow if left unaddressed.

As you work to contain the spread of COVID-19, we ask that you also make the following commitments to reduce hate incidents in Asian American communities.

- **Refrain from using geographic locations or groups of people when naming COVID-19.** Terms such as “Wuhan virus,” “China coronavirus,” or “Chinese coronavirus” stigmatize those who are associated with that place and fuels racism and xenophobia.
- **Share only confirmed and verifiable information pertaining to COVID-19.** Timely and accurate information is a critical tool for combatting misinformation.
- **Condemn negative behaviors, including statements made by other public officials.**

American
entrusted
with
a large
public
platform
have
a special
responsibility
to prevent
the dissemination
of bias
and misinformation.

- **Engage with the Asian American communities you represent to ensure that impacted community voices are heard.**

Leaders can provide comfort and combat hate by practicing tolerance and social inclusion. For example, creating a Governor's or Mayor's task force that engages with local Asian American organizations and community leaders to track, monitor, and address attacks against Asian Americans.

- **Work with your local and state legislative bodies to pass a joint-resolution denouncing racism, xenophobia, and misinformation surrounding it.**

Strong statements from public officials can promote unity and discourage hate.

- **Ensure that materials related to COVID-19 are translated into Asian languages.**

In addition to living in fear of being targeted for COVID-19, many within the Asian immigrant community cannot benefit from resources without in-language assistance.

- **Commit resources to local law enforcement to quickly address and investigate attacks and hate crimes against Asian Americans.**

For many impacted individuals, underreporting of crimes and incidents are often driven by a distrust of law enforcement, or belief that law enforcement will not help them.

These simple actions can make a meaningful difference in reducing the likelihood of anti-Asian hate incidents. We are ready and willing to work with you to identify additional tools and resources to combat misinformation and stigma during this stressful time. Thank you for your consideration.

Most respectfully,

Center for American Progress
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans

¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Coronavirus Disease 2019 - Reducing Stigma" (2020), available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/reducing-stigma.html>.

²Christina Capatides, "Bullies attack Asian American teen at school, accusing him of having coronavirus" CBS (February 14, 2020), available at <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/coronavirus-bullies-attack-asian-teen-los-angeles-accusing-him-of-having-coronavirus/>.

³Sabrina Tavernise and Richard A. Opiel Jr., "Spit On, Yelled At, Attacked: Chinese-Americans Fear for Their Safety" The New York Times (March 24, 2020), available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/23/us/chinese-coronavirus-racist-attacks.html>

⁴Shawn Nottingham and Dave Alsup, "Hmong men record alleged coronavirus discrimination at Indiana hotels" CNN (February 15, 2020), available at <https://www.cnn.com/2020/02/14/us/hmong-men-hotel-refusals/index.html>

⁵<http://www.asianpacificpolicyandplanningcouncil.org/stop-aapi-hate/>

⁶Caitlin Yoshiko Kandil, "Asian American report over 650 racist acts over last week, new data says" NBC News (March 26, 2020), available at <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/asian-americans-report-nearly-500-racist-acts-over-last-week-n1169821>