



ASIAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER  
AMERICAN HEALTH FORUM

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**ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER COMMUNITY HEALTH ADVOCATES  
SUCCEED IN PRESERVING FUNDING FOR  
ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER AIDS PROGRAMS  
Congress Passes Three-Year Reauthorization of Ryan White Act**

**San Francisco, CA**---National Asian American & Pacific Islander (AAPI) HIV/AIDS advocates today applauded the recent passage of a three-year reauthorization of the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency (CARE) Act as the legislation contained key provisions that would benefit AAPI communities. The Ryan White CARE Act provides life-sustaining care and support services to an estimated 500,000 HIV-positive people and their families in the U.S. It is critical to the AAPI community as it is the only source of public funding for HIV/AIDS treatment and care for the many AAPIs living with HIV/AIDS.

AAPIs had the highest estimated annual percentage change (8.1% for AAPI men and 14.3% for AAPI women) in annual HIV/AIDS diagnosis rates according to recent reports from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“It has become increasingly important to address the needs of AAPIs living with AIDS and their families because our community was the only racial/ethnic group to experience statistically significant increases in HIV/AIDS diagnosis rates. Given the AAPI community’s high rates of being uninsured and under-insured for healthcare and the shrinking of public health and assistance programs such as Medicaid, the Ryan White CARE Act has become even more critical for AAPIs who would otherwise not have access to HIV/AIDS treatment and care”, commented Ms. ManChui Leung, Program Director at the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum.

While there are many provisions in the reauthorized Act that remain problematic, there are a few that positively impact AAPIs and immigrants. Maintained in the final compromise version of the bill were the codification of the Minority AIDS Initiative; the inclusion of linguistic services as a support service; the maintenance of hold harmless provisions (3 years); and the stabilization of funding levels (no less the 95% in FY06 level) in urban areas to preserve current infrastructures of care. Ryan White CARE Act services including treatment under the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) are still accessible for the uninsured, underinsured and undocumented. The final version of the Ryan White CARE Act also included the Pacific Island jurisdictions (American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Republic of Palau) as eligible to receive Ryan White funding. Due to lack of awareness in previous reauthorizations, five of the six Pacific Island jurisdictions were omitted in the definition of “state” which resulted in a shutout of funding.

For 83 year old Los Angeles native Hazel Young, the transformation from a Chinese American public service employee to a vocal HIV/AIDS activist was driven by her passion to educate Asian Americans that HIV/AIDS can happen in their families. Her son died of AIDS shortly after his 30<sup>th</sup> birthday twelve years ago.

Even though Mrs. Young was completely supportive of her son and was his primary care giver until his death, she experienced first-hand the stigma and denial from her community that has discouraged many AAPI HIV/AIDS patients from seeking care and support. “As a community, we still have many myths and misconceptions about HIV/AIDS. It may be difficult to accept, but we need to recognize that HIV/AIDS can happen to any of us. Wouldn’t you want to know that there are programs and services available to provide the best care possible for your loved ones?” asked Mrs. Young.

Throughout the past decade, community awareness about HIV/AIDS in the AAPI community has improved. Yet, AAPIs are still more likely than other racial/ethnic groups to access care and treatment very late in their disease, thereby limiting healthcare options.

The Ryan White CARE Act will provide funding for earlier care and treatment to hard to reach communities such as the AAPI communities. “As more AAPIs are infected with HIV/AIDS, access to culturally and linguistically competent care is increasingly important to the patients and their families. As with any other community, AAPIs deserve the highest level of quality health care possible. It can make the difference between life and death.” stressed Leung.

For more information, visit [www.apiahf.org](http://www.apiahf.org) or contact ManChui Leung at [mleung@apiahf.org](mailto:mleung@apiahf.org)

*The Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum is a national policy advocacy organization dedicated to improve the health status of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders. The twenty-year old organization is headquartered in San Francisco with a legislative office in Washington, D.C.*

*The Ryan White CARE Act was named after Ryan White, an Indiana teenager whose courageous struggle with HIV/AIDS and against AIDS-related discrimination helped educate the nation.*

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