



APICHA Supports HIV Testing Bill and Calls for More Funding for HIV Prevention

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New York, NY – May 1, 2009 – The Asian & Pacific Islander Coalition on HIV/AIDS, Inc (APICHA) supports efforts by Assembly Health Chair Richard N. Gottfried, Senate Health Committee Chair Thomas K. Duane and the New York State Department of Health to pass legislation that will substantially increase access to HIV testing throughout the state. This is especially important in light of the new CDC estimate of 56,000 new HIV infections per year, which indicates that the HIV epidemic is worse than previously thought.

Senator Thomas K. Duane introduced S.3293 to the State Senate. The bill would require that an HIV test be offered to individuals, 18-64 years old, who are receiving care in emergency departments, outpatient clinics and community health centers. In a recent study by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, only 6% of A&PIs reported that their doctor recommended an HIV test. Since many A&PIs receive medical care from community physicians in private clinics, APICHA recommends that all medical providers should offer HIV testing to their patients. “There is a need to educate private practitioners who serve A&PIs about the need to offer testing to all patients, regardless of perceived risk,” said Robert Murayama, M.D., Chief Medical Officer of APICHA.

The bill also streamlines the process of obtaining informed consent. Informed consent ensures that the patient or client understands HIV transmission, the test itself and available resources for those who are diagnosed with HIV as well as those testing negative for the virus.



“At my private practice, all patients were offered HIV testing and written consent was obtained by the Medical Assistant when patients presented for routine laboratory testing one week prior to their annual visit. At APICHA, we give the required forms provided by the New York State Department of Health, AIDS Institute to all HIV testing clients. This has posed no hindrance,” said Dr. Murayama. Informed consent is particularly important for Asians and Pacific Islanders (A&PI) who have limited English proficiency and/or have limited knowledge about HIV/AIDS.

According to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, only 19% of A&PIs were tested for HIV compared to 40% of African Americans/Blacks and 39% of Hispanics. Therese R. Rodriguez, Executive Director of APICHA, stated “HIV testing is a critical component to preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS to A&PI communities. Of equal importance is the need to address stigma and educate community members about the value of knowing their status. This essential work must be funded.”

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ABOUT APICHA

Founded in 1989, Asian & Pacific Islander Coalition on HIV/AIDS Inc. (APICHA) provides comprehensive primary care and other medical services, including mental health, STD and Hepatitis and supportive services targeted to Asians and Pacific Islanders, the LGBT community and individuals living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. Over the last twenty-one years, APICHA has shown a considerable growth from a grassroots HIV prevention-focused organization to a patient-centered medical home.

In 2010, the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) awarded APICHA Medical Services Level 3 recognition as a Patient-Centered Medical Home, the highest level of recognition. In 2011, APICHA served over 2,600 patients, including a majority of people of color, LGBTQ and low income individuals in New York City. About a half of APICHA’s patients identify themselves as A&PIs from over 20 ethnic groups, including Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Thai, or Indonesians. APICHA has been a pan-Asian organization with multilingual/multicultural staff fluent in 17 languages with 24 fulltime staff capable of speaking one or more Asian languages.

For more information: www.apicha.org