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April 28, 2021

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API Legislative Caucus Announces 2021 Policy Priorities

SACRAMENTO, CA – Today, the Asian Pacific Islander (API) Legislative Caucus announced its 2021 policy priorities, which include confronting the disturbing increase in anti-Asian hate crimes and discrimination, as well as addressing systemic inequities that have worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since the start of the pandemic, the Stop AAPI Hate reporting project has documented more than 3,700 incidents of anti-Asian attacks nationwide. Almost 50% of the attacks have occurred in California, and around 70% of the reports were made by women.

“The pandemic highlighted the unique needs of API communities and shed light on the inequities built into our governmental systems,” said **Senator Richard Pan (D-Sacramento), Chair of the API Legislative Caucus**. “I am proud the API Legislative Caucus produced a legislative package that reverses systematic biases and works towards ensuring API communities have equal access to key government services. The 12 policy priorities include a hate incidents bill package to address the rise in Anti-Asian Hate crimes. The remaining bills address the need for ethnic studies, language access, health equity, economic recovery, and immigrant rights within API communities.”

“Our top legislative priority is preventing and tracking the alarming rise in hate crimes targeting the Asian American and Pacific Islander community,” said **Assemblymember Evan Low (D-Silicon Valley), Vice Chair of the API Legislative Caucus**. “But we know that these attacks are more than isolated incidents — they are directly linked to systemic racism, xenophobia, and misinformation about the coronavirus pandemic. Creating a safer and more just society will require additional legislation to better educate and inform the public, which is why we also prioritized bills that advance ethnic studies, protect refugees and immigrants, keep the government accountable, and expand access to information and health care.”

Members of the API Legislative Caucus voted to prioritize the following 12 bills for the 2021 legislative session:

Hate Crimes Bill Package:

SB 17 (Pan) – Declares racism a public health crisis and creates the Office of Racial Equity to ensure racial equity in our state government.

AB 28 (Chau) — Helps to prove intent when hate crimes are committed by establishing that a person may be deemed to have acted in whole, or in part, because of the perceived characteristic of the victim, or other person, if they commit certain actions. It further increases the criminal fines for committing hate crimes and uses the additional fines to fund programs on racial or ethnic sensitivity, or other similar training in the area of civil rights.

AB 557 (Muratsuchi) — Requires the California Department of Justice to establish and maintain an accessible toll-free hotline number and an online form for reporting hate crimes and discriminatory incidents.

AB 886 (Chiu) — Funds community-based organizations that facilitate culturally competent and mental health services for victims of hate violence and restorative justice programs.

Additional API Caucus Policy Priorities:

AB 339 (Lee) — Allows for continued remote participation in local and state hearings and meetings, and expands language access.

AB 401 (Chiu) — Ensures everyone using EDD services has access to in-language support.

AB 789 (Low) — Requires health facilities and clinics that provide outpatient primary care services in California to offer voluntary screening for hepatitis B and C, and provides people who test positive with follow-up health care and treatment or referrals for care and treatment.

AB 915 (Chiu) — Establishes a clear and consistent accountability process to ensure all State entities meet their 25% goal for minority, small business, and disabled veterans' business participation in state procurements and contracts. This measure also establishes a definition for "Disadvantaged Business Enterprises" for state contracting purposes.

AB 937 (Kalra) — This bill, the Voiding Inequality and Seeking Inclusion for Our Immigrant Neighbors (VISION) Act, which would protect refugee and immigrant community members — who have already been deemed eligible for release — from being funneled by local jails and the state prison system into immigration detention.

AB 1040 (Muratsuchi) — Expands access to ethnic studies courses at each community college district and requires the completion of a three-unit ethnic studies course for associate degree completion, addressing a gap in our public education curriculum.

AB 1236 (Ting) — Requires the collection of demographic data for all registered health professions under the Department of Consumer Affairs.

AB 1358 (Muratsuchi) — Requires that all 58 counties have to release standardized and disaggregated data, add additional ethnic groups to the data collection, and incorporate language and race (disaggregated) in the state's Health Equity Metric of the CA Healthy Places Index (HPI).

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The California Asian Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus represents and advocates for the interests of the diverse API communities throughout California. It seeks to increase Asian Pacific Islander participation and representation in all levels of government.

Website of the California API Legislative Caucus: <http://apicaucus.legislature.ca.gov>