



NCAPIP
National Council of Asian
Pacific Islander Physicians

Position on Immigration Reform March 2013

The National Council of Asian Pacific Islander Physicians (NCAPIP) is a national organization of Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander physicians that advocates for the health and well being of our patients and communities. NCAPIP believes that there should be optimal health for all and supports policies, regulations and legislation that transform and reform to this end goal.

Immigration reform is important, urgent, and very much needed. Healthcare issues and a healthcare perspective should be taken into account and integrated into the reform.

NCAPIP believes that, in order to achieve optimal health for all, immigration reform must address affordable access and coverage and the development of an efficient and effective workforce.

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are incredibly diverse, and their ever evolving health care needs are and have been profoundly impacted by their immigration status. It is estimated that among the population overall, more than two thirds are first generation Americans and in some communities, the percentage can be upwards of 80 percent. They are from varied backgrounds such as sixth generation American citizens, “wards” of U.S. jurisdictions (e.g. Marshallese), resettled refugees, or highly skilled recent immigrants.

While health care disparities exist among most, if not all, immigrant communities, Asian American and Pacific Islander communities manifest unique inequities related to their immigration status. Immigrants from Southeast Asia are among the highest risk patients for tuberculosis, an ever growing global health concern. Persons of Asian ancestry have a carrier rate of Hepatitis B that is 7 – 14 times the rate of Caucasians in the United States. Hansen’s disease (leprosy) disproportionately impacts patients from the Pacific Basin. These are simple, but important, epidemiologic facts.

Thus, consistent with our previous positions on health care reform, NCAPIP recommends:

- Removing all restrictions for new legal immigrants to access health care coverage, including the five-year waiting period for Medicaid. Under today’s system, low-income, legal immigrants must wait five years for Medicaid, despite paying taxes. This waiting period prevents individuals from accessing the care they need, allows medical conditions to worsen, and increases disparities.
- Expanding health care coverage with a system such that individuals are not restricted from coverage based on differences in residency status. NCAPIP believes that immigration reform must meet the health care needs of every individual and that state insurance marketplaces must be accessible to all.
- Supporting pro-immigrant measures and proposals that remove barriers to every level of public education for undocumented students such state level DREAM Acts and the federal DREAM Act. We should advance the opportunities for all motivated, community oriented, and academically gifted students to help meet the health care professional needs of our community.