



**SEARAC**

## **Southeast Asian American Requests for the Fourth COVID-19 Package**

April 6, 2020

Southeast Asian (SEAAs) Americans continue to struggle as COVID-19 spreads across the United States. Our communities continue to face significant challenges during this pandemic. Many SEAA immigrant families continue to lack basic access to healthcare and economic relief, some remain detained in substandard ICE detention, and others remain essential workers without adequate health and safety protections. The document outlines pertinent immigration-related priorities for the 4th supplemental COVID-19 package.

### **ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE**

- Provide no-cost testing and treatment for all, including immigrant communities; ensure that testing and treatment for COVID-19 are covered under emergency Medicaid
- Incentivize states to adopt or immediately implement the Affordable Care Act's expansion of Medicaid to low-income adults.

### **CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

- Prevent the spread of infection by releasing individuals over 50 and under 21 from federal prisons and state and local jails on supervised release
- Decrease mortality rates by releasing medically vulnerable populations from federal prisons and state and local jails, including individuals who are pregnant; have chronic lung disease or asthma; have congestive heart failure, coronary artery disease or hypertension; have a weakened immune system; and have any other condition that a medical professional verifies to be an increased risk factor if the person is exposed to COVID-19.

### **DATA COLLECTION**

- Require the collection, analysis, and reporting of race and ethnicity data based on the categories enumerated in the 2015 American Communities Survey regarding individuals tested and treated for COVID-19

### **ECONOMIC AND HOUSING SECURITY**

- Provide cash payments to individuals who file taxes with an ITIN and create a process for those who are not required to file taxes but are otherwise eligible
- Improve paid sick leave (PSL) and paid family and medical leave (PFML). Congress should expand PSL and PFML to all employers regardless of size, include individuals caring for themselves or a family member experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, regardless of immigration status, and require full wage replacement for all days used.

- Incentivize the suspension of rent and mortgage payments for individuals unable to cover such costs during a national emergency
- Increase federal funding for access to emergency housing for those who are unhoused, with anti-discrimination stipulations based on race, ethnicity, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender-identity, or country of origin

### **EDUCATION ACCESS**

- Any effort to close the digital divide for remote learning (eg. devices, internet access, online content) must include accommodations for English learners and be made available to all students regardless of immigration status
- Translation of all educational materials including remote learning materials in home languages, especially beyond just Spanish, provide interpreters for families with limited English proficiency in remote engagement with families (eg. remote but verbal communication with families)
- Increase funding for ESEA Title III (English Language Acquisition)
- Increase funding for Title III and Title V institutions (MSIs, including AANAPISIs)

### **IMMIGRATION**

- Include more measures to protect workers, including automatic extension of work authorization
  - Halt the 60-day deadline for H-1B workers to find employment, if terminated from their current place of employment, during a national emergency
- Place restrictions on immigration detention and enforcement and provide no supplemental funds for ICE or CBP
  - Ensure that DHS suspends all immigration enforcement during the course of the pandemic including halting transfers of people from federal, state or local criminal custody to ICE custody
  - Require ICE and CBP to use all available discretionary powers to release all immigrants possible from detention utilizing humanitarian parole, release on recognizance, and including provisions allowing for release notwithstanding other provisions of law.
  - Suspend all check-ins, including in-person and alternative check-in methods
  - Require that DHS suspend all deportations for individuals from countries with travel restrictions from the United States
- Halt implementation of new public charge rules
  - Public charge application through COVID - benefits shouldn't apply to public charge determination
- Extend the validity period of issued visas. Inability to travel during the limited visa validity period should not require an applicant to start the years-long process from the beginning.

### **IMMIGRANT WORKER PROTECTIONS**

- Create a federal workplace safety standard. Congress should quickly pass a law requiring OSHA to issue an Emergency Temporary Standard to ensure that all frontline and essential workers are protected from the spread of COVID-19.
- Ensure immigrant work protections
  - USCIS is granting temporary work visas extensions to returning H-2A and H-2B (classified as essential workers) not
  - Increase health and safety standards for all essential workers, including returning H-2A and H-2B workers
    - Such standards should include access to medical care and information about prevention and treatment of COVID-19 for guest workers.

### **LANGUAGE ACCESS**

- Ensure language is not a barrier to testing, treatment or recovery

- Funding must be allocated to provide in-language documents about both COVID-19 and the availability of economic support programs. Funding must also be provided to health care providers and other front-line workers with access to interpretation services