

Tuesday, 10.09.2007, 09:29am (GMT)

-  HOME
-  FAQ
-  RSS
-  LINKS
-  SITE MAP
-  CONTACT

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Keyword:  Search [\[Advance Search\]](#)

NAVIGATION

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- [Community Post](#)
- [Health Science](#)
- [Horoscope](#)
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- [India](#)
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- [Perspective](#)
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- [Sports](#)
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Your Name:

Your Email:

IMMIGRATION

Leaders risk health of millions of immigrant children

Monday, 10.08.2007, 12:18am (GMT-7)

NEW YORK: The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF), the nation's only pan-Asian children's advocacy organization, has said it was disappointed with bipartisan Congressional leadership's decision to exclude the Immigrant Children's Health Improvement Act (ICHIA) in the reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Act (S-CHIP) (H.R. 976).

By not including ICHIA in the reauthorization of S-CHIP, millions of immigrant children across the nation are forced to go without health care as they have no other source for health insurance coverage, the CACF said.

"All children living in the United States have the right to grow up healthy and safe. Congressional leaders have failed to protect our children by excluding their voice from the health care debate," says Ruchika Bajaj, CACF's Health Policy and Program Coordinator.

Over 12% of Asian Pacific Islander children are uninsured in the United States. While the five-year waiting period for legal immigrants to access public benefits prohibits many children from accessing S-CHIP and Medicaid, those who do qualify do not enroll in S-CHIP because of language and cultural barriers and misinformation about eligibility and documentation requirements.

Even though New York State is one of several states that identify state funds to support all children's access to the health care they need, there are many children who still remain uninsured. The Asian Pacific American community, the fastest growing community in New York City, is diverse in ethnicities, national origins, socioeconomic status, languages/dialects, and immigration history. Half of Asian Pacific American infants in New York City are born into poverty.

Many Asian Pacific American children and families still experience difficulty accessing health and human services needed to survive in New York City. Over 12% of Asian Pacific American children live in households where no one over the age of 14 can speak English well.

"We commend New York for its commitment to immigrant children, but so much more needs to be done in our state and our nation. Offering viable health coverage options and preventive health services to immigrant children now can save millions of dollars in health care costs in the long run.

With the health care of so many children depending on this critical decision, decision-makers cannot ignore or neglect our voice a minute longer. We eagerly anticipate a response from leaders to ensure health justice for all," concludes Wayne Ho, CACF's Executive Director.

The Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF), the nation's only pan-Asian children's advocacy organization, aims to improve the well-being of Asian Pacific American children and families in New York City.

India Post News Service

-  Comments (0)
-  Print
-  Tell friend
-  Top

Other Articles:

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EVENTS

October 2007

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

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