

**PROJECT CHARGE
PRESS CONFERENCE LAUNCHING PAN-ASIAN HEALTH COALITION TO IMPROVE FINANCIAL ACCESS
FEBRUARY 19, 2008**

PROJECT CHARGE

Asian Americans for Equality

Asian Outreach Clinic, Child Center of New York

Asian & Pacific Islander Coalition on HIV/AIDS

Center for the Study of Asian American Health, NYU

Charles B. Wang Community Health Center

Chinese-American Planning Council

Coalition for Asian American Children and Families

Family Health Project

Henry Street Settlement

Kalusugan Coalition

Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York, Inc.

MAAWS for Global Welfare, Inc.

New York Asian Women's Center

South Asian Health Initiative, NYU

Funded by Health Through Action, an initiative of the Asian & Pacific Islander Health Forum and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation

On February 19, 2008, **Project CHARGE (Coalition for Health Access to Reach Greater Equity)** members were joined at City Hall by **Assembly Members Richard Gottfried and Ellen Young, City Council Members Alan Gerson and Robert Jackson, and the Asian & Pacific Islander Health Forum (APIAHF)** to launch a four-year campaign to improve financial access to health care for the City's diverse Asian Pacific Islander (API) community.

Launching Project CHARGE

Project CHARGE is 1 of 8 coalitions funded by **Health Through Action**, a groundbreaking national initiative between APIAHF and **W.K. Kellogg Foundation**. The Kellogg Foundation awarded an unprecedented \$16.5 million for Health Through Action, in which APIAHF and the 8 coalitions will work together to reduce health disparities among APIs locally and nationally. **Project CHARGE was awarded \$600,000 over 4 years to increase financial access to health care for the diverse API community of New York City.** Project CHARGE will build local solutions to national problems.



Suki Terada Ports, Project CHARGE partners, and elected officials at the press conference launching Project CHARGE

Supporting the Uninsured

There are real and human costs to not providing health care coverage for all APIs in New York City. In New York City, 1 in 5 APIs has been uninsured in the past year. Failure of the health system to educate the API consumer combined with the high cost of health care drives the API community to rely on a patch-work system for necessary medical care.

“The API community is locked out of the health care system because of high costs and language barriers,” said **Wayne Ho, Executive Director of the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF)**. “This pioneering relationship between the Asian Pacific Islander community, government, and the philanthropic sector will expand financial access to health care for not only Asian Pacific Islanders but also all New Yorkers.”



(From l to r) City Council Members Alan Gerson and Robert Jackson, Assembly Member Richard Gottfried (D-NY), Wayne Ho (CACF), Assembly Member Ellen Young (D-NY), and Dr. Marguerite Ro (APIAHF)

The API community's health disparities are exacerbated because foundation support has not kept up with this community's growth. Only 0.4% of foundation funding is invested in addressing the growing social and economic challenges in the API community. Creating a long-term investment strategy for the API community is vital to effecting lasting change.

Increasing Financial Access

Over the next 4 years, Project CHARGE will work toward expanding financial access to health care for the diverse API community of New York City by:

- ❖ Increasing access to public and private health insurance coverage, and
- ❖ Increasing affordability of care, including prescription medication and specialty services



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New York State Assembly Health Committee Chair Richard Gottfried said, “The daily reality for millions of New York residents includes having to deal with a health care system that does not speak their language. Project CHARGE and the efforts of others to provide universal health care are all tied together...I am happy to be here today, and together we are working to change that reality.”

Project CHARGE is a groundbreaking initiative that will build a unified voice for underserved communities in the national health care debate. “As the only Asian American representative in the New York State Assembly, I fight to ensure that the Asian Pacific Islander community has a strong voice in government,” said **Assembly Member Ellen Young**. “This groundbreaking public and private partnership guarantees that all New Yorkers have an equal access to health care.”



Noilyn Abesamis-Mendoza from the Kalusugan Coalition is interviewed by *Asian Journal*

Connecting Local, State, and National Efforts

At nearly 12% of the City’s population, more APIs live and work in New York City than any other city in the United States. By joining forces with the API community, decision-makers will be able to create informed health policies that increase financial access to health care for all New Yorkers. **New York City Council Member Robert Jackson** said, “Health care is one of the major issues here in New York City. As the co-chair of the Black, Latino, and Asian Caucus in City Council...it is my pleasure to know that this grant will help Asian Pacific Islanders not insured and give them

access to appropriate health care.”

“This effort is literally a matter of saving lives – overcoming the financial hurdles, expanding health access through education, providing culturally competent and language accessible care, treatment, and referral...We know that Project CHARGE will succeed in saving lives in the Asian Pacific Islander community,” said **City Council Member Alan J. Gerson**. “I know that I speak for all of my colleagues as I pledge our support across all levels of government – not only the community’s allies in City Council but also in Albany.”

“This is the first time a national private foundation has recognized and sought to remedy the inequities that are happening in our community. In this time of health care reform, efforts need to be made at the local, state, and national level. We have to revisit what health care should look like and what it should be,” said **Dr. Marguerite Ro, APIAHF Deputy Director**. “We thank the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for partnering with us and are very pleased to award this grant to Project CHARGE. We expect the New York coalition to help lead the way across the country, developing strategies and advocating for equitable financial access to health care.”

Advocating to Expand Financial Access

The key strategy to expanding financial access to health care for the diverse API community of New York City is to work with stakeholders across different sectors. Project CHARGE will collaborate with the government, philanthropic, non-profit, business, and media sectors. Specifically, Project CHARGE will:

- ❖ Educate decision-makers on financial barriers to health care and on policy changes to reduce these barriers.
- ❖ Advocate for better policies, funding, services, and systems to increase financial access to health care.
- ❖ Build broad support for policy changes by collaborating with API organizations, service providers, advocacy organizations, health professionals, insurance plans, research institutions, and mainstream and ethnic media.
- ❖ Inform the API community about their options for public and private health insurance and their rights to health care.

“This coalition is a milestone in terms of Asian American and Pacific Islander health. It has been a long time coming, but we are united from coast to coast,” concluded **Suki Terada Ports, Executive Director of the Family Health Project**. “We are excited to partner with local and state government and foundations to change the tide and raise the visibility of Asian Pacific Islanders.”

For more information, please contact Vanessa Leung, Deputy Director, Coalition for Asian American Children and Families, at 212-809-4675 ext. 102 or vleung@cacf.org.



Golam Mawla from MAAWS for Global Welfare, Inc. speaks to reporters