April 2, 2020

This is a statement from the nine co-sponsors of the Asian Minnesotans at the Capitol virtual advocacy event to demand that our policy-makers invest in our community. We are united today in the face of this pandemic to advocate for equitable resources and to denounce racism and acts of bigotry against Asians in Minnesota and across the country. Our community is experiencing heightened hate crimes fueled by xenophobia, racism, and a misleading narrative. Taking thoughtful measures that center on racial equity and justice is more necessary than ever, especially during this crisis when inequities in public health access and job security are magnified.

The Asian Minnesotan community is 273,194 strong and collectively pays more than $4.2 million in taxes annually, owns 15,553 businesses that employ 27,500 employees. Collectively, we are 40+ cultural communities speaking diverse languages with unique cultural practices and migration experiences. Our most vulnerable members live in poverty, are limited English proficient, and are young (60,989 or 6.9% are students in our public schools). Large sectors of our community are facing social and financial insecurities.

We are counting on you to support our community by taking the following actions.

**COVID-19: Make information more accessible for limited English proficient neighbors.**
- Understanding the policy and program changes in the executive orders and statewide directives is critical for equitable and inclusive implementation. All emergency policies and information must be made available in both written and verbal translations. We urge you to use the talents in our community such as our ethnic media, translation businesses/consultants, community-based organizations and leaders to develop culturally relevant ways to effectively share urgent and life-saving information.

**Xenophobia / Hate Crime: Denounce racism and keep families together.**
- Asian Minnesotans are often an invisible community in good times and marginalized or targeted in times of crisis. In addition to Governor Walz’s statements, we ask all legislative leaders and Commissioners to make strong public statements to denounce acts of racism against Asian communities. Also, the Legislature should pass bipartisan legislation, such as HF 3837/SF 4332 to strengthen hate crimes laws. We also urge investments for community-based solutions because many hate incidents are not prosecutable and communities must be supported to create safety beyond criminalization.
- Fear-based federal immigration policies continue to tear families apart. We urge you to support HF 3975/SF 4087, which reforms the criminal justice system to protect our community members from deportation and keep our families intact.

**Economics: Invest in community-based organizations and small businesses.**
- Prioritize resources to nonprofit organizations that provide essential wrap-around support to the most vulnerable members of our communities.
● Partner with us to find effective solutions for small businesses beyond loans which are short term solutions and do not effectively address all burdens placed on micro and small businesses.
● Expand unemployment insurance to cover self-employed individuals and those who have exhausted their sick-and-safe time. Create policies that ensure sick and safe time for all workers after this crisis has passed, so community members do not feel compelled to work through illness to pay their bills.

**Education: Invest in multilingual staff for community support and teaching.**
● Develop thorough planning and equitable implementation of distance learning centered on students with the most needs. Distance learning can be problematic due to hidden costs, and parents’ lack of access to the internet, learning resources and tools, which often leaves students with the burden of figuring it out for themselves.
● Retain and increase the number of multilingual staff who play an important role in supporting diverse student populations. This has been identified as an equity issue and if not accomplished will do irreparable harm to Minnesota’s students and widen the already alarming education opportunity gap.

Thank you for your efforts to keep our community safe during these uncertain times.

**Asian Minnesotans at the Capitol Co-Sponsors**
Coalition of Asian American Leaders (CAAL)
Filipinx for Immigrant Rights and Racial Justice Minnesota (FIRM)
India Association of Minnesota (IAM)
Karen Organization of Minnesota (KOM)
MN Private College Council
Philippine Study Group of Minnesota (PSGM)
ReleaseMN8
Reviving the Islamic Sisterhood for Empowerment (RISE)
The Southeast Asian Diaspora Project (SEAD)