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April 28, 2014

The Honorable Tom Perez
Secretary of Labor
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Secretary Perez:

On behalf of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) and the diverse constituencies we represent, we would like to thank you for meeting with our Caucus last month to discuss pressing issues affecting the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. One key item we discussed was the importance of data disaggregation, which is vital to understanding the wide-ranging needs of our community.

AAPIs are an incredibly diverse population, comprised of over 50 different ethnicities that speak over 100 different languages. The AAPI community also varies greatly in English-language proficiency, historic immigration patterns, and the defined economic sectors in which individuals work. When viewed in aggregate, the success of some AAPI subpopulations often masks the needs of others.

Disaggregated data reveals that many within the AAPI community were devastated by the impacts of the Great Recession and still continue to face significant unmet needs. The National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development released a report last year showing that the AAPI community is one of the fastest growing poverty populations in the wake of the recession. In addition, Asian Americans as a whole remain unemployed for longer periods than any other racial group. To compound these problems, the AAPI community is undercounted in surveys and metrics that are used to assess the strength of our nation's labor force.

Without disaggregated AAPI data on the economy and employment, it is difficult to identify and address disparities within subpopulations of the AAPI community that require greater attention and resources. In 2011, the Department of Labor issued a special report entitled "The Asian-American Labor Force in the Recovery." The report outlines detailed AAPI data that is particularly useful for policymakers. We have enclosed the report for your reference and request that the Department of Labor produce a similar report annually with disaggregated data on the AAPI community.

In order to better assess the unique needs of our community, we also request that the Department provide seasonally adjusted data on the AAPI population. Although monthly unemployment statistics are released on Asian Americans, the current sample size is too small to be seasonally adjusted. We ask that the sample size of AAPIs surveyed is increased in order to receive more accurate information on the AAPI labor force.

We understand that there are cultural and linguistic barriers to collecting this data and would like to work with the Department of Labor to address these obstacles.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Judy Chu", written over a horizontal line.

JUDY CHU, PhD
Member of Congress
CAPAC Chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Grace Meng", written over a horizontal line.

GRACE MENG
Member of Congress
CAPAC Economic Development Taskforce Chair

CC: Christopher P. Lu, Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor
Seema Nanda, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor