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KOREAN AMERICAN SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS WANT TO MAKE HEALTH CARE AFFORDABLE FOR ALL

Survey shows Koreatown’s immigrant small business owners overwhelmingly support a public health insurance option, including immigrants in health reform, and are willing to contribute to a system of shared responsibility

(Los Angeles, CA) – Korean American small business owners want real health reform, want the option of a public health insurance plan, and support provisions that would increase help immigrants access care. These are the findings of the report “We Must Have Health Reform: Survey of Korean American Small Business Owners in Los Angeles” released today in Los Angeles by the National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC) and the Korean Resource Center, with support from the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF) and the Main Street Alliance.

Key findings are of the report (download the report here)

- 52 percent of the respondents did not have health insurance, and 96 percent were immigrants who had been living in the United States an average 18 years.
- 92 percent of respondents supported the public option.
- 72 percent of respondents supported removing the five-year bar for legal immigrants in publicly-funded programs such as Medicaid, Medicare and Children’s Health Insurance Program.
- When asked what their top three issues within health reform were, they stated (in order of popularity): 1) removal of the five-year bar on Medicaid to include legal immigrants, 2) expansion of Medicaid for all children and pregnant women regardless of immigration status and 3) ensuring that more people are covered to reduce health costs for all.
- 70 percent of respondents said they believed that their business would be more productive if they had access to coverage for themselves and their employees.

“We are days away from the passage of health reform law. One of the perspectives that we haven’t heard from is immigrant small business owners. We hope that this report will be useful in guiding Members of Congress and the White House to craft a bill that will work for everyone, including immigrant communities and those who work and own small businesses,” stated EunSook Lee, executive director of NAKASEC.

“NAKASEC’s survey clearly demonstrates just how important a public plan option is in providing security and stability our communities and for strengthening our nation’s economy,” said Deeana Jang, policy director of APIAHF. “And the small business owners understand that for health care reform to succeed in lowering costs for all, we must eliminate barriers to public programs for legally residing immigrants. We must also not impose restrictions based on immigration status to access the health insurance exchange or a public plan.”

“Since we arrived to this country nine-and-a-half years ago and became legal permanent residents in 2006, my husband and I have been one accident away from disaster because we’re uninsured. What isn’t understood is that people who work or own in small business cannot afford to pay for private health insurance. And with the 5-year bar, we can’t even apply for public health programs even though we pay personal and business taxes. It’s hard to believe that this is the American way to have this discriminatory waiting period,” shared Jong Ran Kim, small business owner in LA.

“We’re all paying the cost of our broken health care system – in unaffordable premiums for those who still have coverage, and in lost employees, lower productivity, and financial insecurity for those who don’t,” said Freddy Castiblanco, owner of the Terraza 7 train Café in Jackson Heights, NY and a member of the Main Street Alliance.

Speakers from today’s press conference are available for interview. To arrange an interview with:

- **Hye Young Ko, EunSook Lee or Dae Joong Yoon**, please contact Sookyung Oh at 202-567-1397.
- **Freddy Castiblanco**, please contact Rebecca Telzak at 347-512-9073.
- **Deeana Jang**, please contact Andrew Sousa at 415-513-6136.

Hye Young Ko (Los Angeles, CA) is the owner of MuhRiGa Hair Studio. She immigrated to the U.S. for 21 years ago. She, her husband, and her two sons have been uninsured for all of these years due to the lack of affordable options. She believes it is important to have affordable health care option for people of all income levels – whether for the poorest in Medicaid, or families who are not eligible for Medicaid yet cannot afford coverage.

EunSook Lee (Los Angeles, CA) is the Executive Director of NAKASEC. Prior to working at NAKASEC, EunSook was the executive director of Korean American Women In Need, a bilingual domestic violence service agency in Chicago and Station Manager at CKLN Radio, Inc. in Toronto. EunSook is currently vice-chair of the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans and a board member of the National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development and the Korean Resource Center.

Dae Joong Yoon (Los Angeles, CA) has served as Korean Resource Center (KRC)’s executive director from 1998 to 2000 and resumed his position in July 2003. Dae Joong has more than 15 years of community education and organizing experiences for the issues of immigration policy, health access, civic participation, voting rights, environmental justice, and affordable housing. Currently, Yoon serves on the board of directors at the Strategic Concept in Organizing & Policy Education (SCOPE) and NAKASEC, and is an Advisory Board member for the City of Los Angeles Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs and a Community Advisory board member for the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Social Services.

Freddy Castiblanco (Queens, NY) has owned his business in Jackson Heights for eight years. An immigrant from Colombia who was a doctor in his home country, Castiblanco started his business in an abandoned storefront and has built La Terraza into a vibrant enterprise with 11 employees. But affordable health coverage remains out of reach. As a member of the Main Street Alliance, Castiblanco testified before the House Committee on Small Business on June 3, 2009, suggesting a compromise is within reach on health reform.

Deeana Jang, JD (Washington, DC) is the policy director for the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF), a national health policy organization dedicated to strengthening policies, programs, and research to improve the health and well-being of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders. She is a co-founder of the Asian Women’s Shelter, one of the first battered women’s shelters in the country to address the needs of Asian immigrant women and their children. She is a former chair of the board of the National Immigration Project and also served on the boards of the Northern California Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights and the National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum.

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