



PREVENTING VIOLENCE
AND DEVELOPING
YOUTH LEADERS

March 28, 2016

Assembly Member Rob Bonta
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 6005
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support- AB 1726: Accounting for Health and Education in API Demographics Act (AHEAD Act)

Dear Assembly Member Bonta:

Youth ALIVE! is pleased to support Assembly Bill 1726: Accounting for Health and Education in API Demographics Act (AHEAD Act). Youth ALIVE! is a violence prevention and intervention organization that helps young people become leaders and advocates for the change they would like to see in their communities through our Teens on Target Program, mentors and supports healing for young people who have been violently injured through our Caught in the Crossfire program, and works with families grieving in the wake of a homicide through our Khadafy Washington Project.

The AHEAD Act would illuminate economic, health, and educational disparities within Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities by requiring collection of disaggregated demographic data by California's public higher education institutions including the California Community Colleges, California State University, and the University of California systems and the Department of Public Health and Department of Health Care Services. This bill would also increase public access and awareness of this data by requiring these institutions and agencies to annually publish demographic data on their websites. Data collected would include, but would not be limited to, enrollment and graduation rates, disease rates, health insurance coverage, birth, and death rates.

Data has the power to reveal or to conceal the tremendous diversity within our communities. In particular, data on AAPIs in general often overshadow unique challenges faced by Southeast Asian American (SEAA) and Pacific Islander students and refugee communities. These challenges include high rates of poverty, limited English proficiency, and cultural barriers that have resulted in low educational outcomes and impaired access to health care. A recent report, "The Academic Challenges of Southeast Asians at Fresno State," authored by Gong, Kubo, and Takahashi (2013), found that SEAA students fell behind their White, Hispanic, and other AAPI peers in both graduation and retention rates.¹ Based on demographic data currently collected by the US Census, dramatic disparities in poverty rates have already been revealed. While 12% of Asian Americans in California live in poverty, a closer examination finds that 35% of Hmong, 28.8% of Cambodians, 23.5% of Laotians, and 17% of Vietnamese live in poverty. In addition, while 33.9% of all Asian Americans in California have limited

¹ Gong, G.L., Kubo, H, Takahashi, Y. *The Academic Challenges of Southeast Asians at Fresno State*. 2013

http://www.fresnostate.edu/academics/oie/documents/documents-research/2014/SEA%20BRIEF_FINAL.pdf

Youth ALIVE is a 501c3 nonprofit organization. Our Tax ID is 94-3143254.

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