

WASHINGTON, DC – Yesterday, House and Senate Leadership, along with the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), hosted their first Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Education Forum. At a time when Congress is seeking input for its upcoming education bills, the Forum drew participants from all around the country, including Asian American elected school board members, educators, academics, and community advocates. Senator Maria Cantwell and Congressman Mike Honda (CA-15), Chair of CAPAC, co-chaired the meeting.

At the forum, participants emphasized the diversity within the AAPI community, which ranges from high achieving students to some of the lowest achieving students in the nation. Factors such as English proficiency and socio-economic status account for many differences. To address these disparities, participants voiced the need for the federal government to disaggregate data among the various AAPI ethnic groups, ensure adequate services for English Language Learners (ELLs), and encourage parent involvement by engaging AAPI community based organizations.

"With work ongoing on the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind, it is imperative that lawmakers receive input from all communities about this legislation. Congress is committed to fulfilling our promise to improve student performance, increase school accountability, and provide students with the resources they need to learn the skills crucial to their future success," said Speaker Nancy Pelosi. "Today, we had an opportunity to listen to school board members and community advocates from across the nation regarding the unique needs and challenges Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) students face. Whether it's teacher quality, fair assessments, or adequately funding programs for special needs students, Democrats are committed to providing high quality education to all of America's students, creating a nation ready for the challenges of the 21st century."

"With 14 million Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders part of our American fabric, it is critical to hear from AAPI leaders about the range of education issues facing the community," said Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid. "At today's AAPI Education Forum, they stressed the importance of determining how to measure progress for students learning English, ensuring that we have accurate data to help inform instruction and identify areas for growth, and increasing parental involvement. I am hopeful that we can address many of these concerns as we reauthorize the No Child Left Behind Act."

"It may be tempting to think that all Asian American and Pacific Islander students do well," said Congressman Mike Honda (CA-15), Chair of CAPAC. "It is time to dispel this model minority myth by collecting disaggregated data that shows the true diversity of our communities, and shape education policy based on what's really happening in our classrooms. I will continue to work with the Forum participants, my colleagues at the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus and other Members of Congress to meet the diverse needs of AAPI students. I am proud to have hosted this forum with House and Senate leadership to ensure that voices of AAPI leaders are brought to the table. I hope that the participants will continue to give their input as we consider education legislation."

"Every child deserves a quality education, which is why Senate Democrats are so pleased to be co-hosting this first ever Asian American and Pacific Islander Education Forum," said Senator Debbie Stabenow, Chair of the Senate Democratic Steering and Outreach Committee. "We understand that for America to stay ahead in the global marketplace, it is imperative that we invest innovation and technology for our schools while training the highest quality teachers. Our Democratic majority is leading the way on these important issues through initiatives like the Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education Grants to help college students who are studying to be teachers pay their tuition. We look forward to continuing our work with educators and the Asian American and Pacific Islander community to give America's children the education that they deserve."

"Today's forum was a great opportunity to raise issues of importance to the AAPI community and ensure that they do not go ignored as Congress works to reauthorize No Child Left Behind," said Senator Maria Cantwell, who co-chaired the Forum. "We often think of Asian Americans as 'ideal students,' but this is a diverse community with different learning challenges. Lumping all AAPI students together and overlooking the uniqueness of each community does these students a disservice. I hope to take what we learned today and work with my colleagues to develop a reauthorization that speaks to the needs of all AAPI students."

###

The Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) is a bicameral and bipartisan caucus of Members of Congress of Asian and Pacific Islander descent and Members who have a strong dedication to promoting the well-being of the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. Founded in 1994 by then Congressman Norman Mineta, and currently chaired by Congressman Michael Honda, CAPAC has been addressing the needs of the AAPI community in all areas of American life. For more information on CAPAC, please call (202) 225-2631 or visit <http://www.honda.house.gov/capac> .