



ASIAN PACIFIC POLICY & PLANNING COUNCIL

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## **LA Leaders Stand with Asian American Pacific Islander Angelenos Against Racism Related to Coronavirus**

LOS ANGELES, February 13, 2020 – In a show of unity with leaders from local Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities, public officials today said racism and xenophobia related to fears of the coronavirus will not be tolerated in Los Angeles County. At a news conference hosted by Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (A3PCON), the officials urged anyone who experiences verbal or physical harassment to report it, saying all Angelenos have the right to feel safe at home, school, work and other public places.

“The coronavirus has ignited a wave of anxiety and misinformation even though the threat to County residents remains low according to our Public Health Department,” said Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda L. Solis. “I want to assure the public that our medical experts have been working closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to conduct health screenings at LAX, which is our first line of defense against the virus. In the meantime, we must not circulate misinformation or scapegoat groups of people. I urge everyone to visit [publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/coronavirus/](https://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/coronavirus/) for accurate updates.”

According to A3PCON leaders and media reports, AAPIs in Los Angeles are experiencing a racist backlash related to misinformation and hysteria about the coronavirus. “Recently, a young person was bullied at his middle school, beaten up and accused of having the coronavirus simply because he was Asian American,” said Manjusha Kulkarni, Executive Director of A3PCON. She added that there have been numerous incidents reported on social media of people being harassed as well as rumors being spread.

“It is unfortunate that misinformation about the coronavirus is causing fear in some of our school communities,” said Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools Debra Duardo. “It is our duty as educators to maintain children’s routines and sense of normalcy so we don’t contribute to their anxieties. Our schools must remain safe and welcoming environments for all our young people.”

“Discrimination targeting our Asian American and Chinese American friends, neighbors and businesses is harmful to our entire community,” said Barbara Ferrer, PhD, MPH, MEd. Director of Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. “This is not the time for the perpetuation of stereotypes and misinformation about novel coronavirus. Public Health encourages everyone to continue to enjoy all that our Asian communities have to offer.”

“People have a right to be afraid, but must understand that outbreaks and pandemics are human tragedies that impact us all directly or indirectly as ONE diverse community,” Dr. Muntu Davis, County Health Officer, added. “Embracing, not stigmatizing, others and spreading accurate information about what’s happening locally is what helps manage our fear and both the individual and collective actions needed to protect our entire community.”

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“Unfortunately, too many Angelenos are having to deal with the spread of the pernicious poison of prejudice around the coronavirus,” stated Robin Toma, Executive Director of the LA County Human Relations Commission. “Working together, we can prevent the spread of that contagion and provide support to people who have experienced a backlash related to the disease.” He urged anyone experiencing incidents of racism or physical or verbal assaults related to fears of the coronavirus to contact 211 or local law enforcement. For those experiencing anxiety, depression or other mental health issues, A3PCON is offering free mental health services through Special Service for Groups, which can be accessed through referrals from 211.

“There is no place for hate in Los Angeles. A3PCON and our 40 member organizations are here to support LA’s AAPI communities in reporting incidents, reaching out to our county agencies, and addressing people’s fears and anxieties,” Kulkarni said. “AAPI Angelenos like all other residents in our city deserve to be safe and healthy at school, work and in public spaces, and we will help them to continue to do that.”

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Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (A3PCON) is a coalition of more than forty community-based organizations that serve and represent the 1.5 million Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Los Angeles County. A3PCON strives to promote the needs, interests and concerns of AAPI community members, strengthen collaboration, planning and collective action and activate the AAPI electorate to achieve social justice for our communities.