US Rep. To Introduce Legislation To Address National Hepatitis Epidemic

WASHINGTON D.C. - U.S. Representative Michael Honda (D-CA) is introducing bi-partisan legislation in Congress to address a national Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C epidemic impacting America. The bill incorporates the monitoring, testing and research and education provisions contained in the Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C bills from the 110th Congress. This month, as House Appropriator, Rep Honda secured a $1.8 million increase, in the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Subcommittee appropriations bill, to boost the Center for Disease Control's ability to assess and address hepatitis.

Rep Honda's bi-partisan legislation, drafted in coordination with Reps Towns, Dent, Cassidy and Cao, will bring together the common concerns of the diverse viral hepatitis community to create a surveillance system to track chronic Hepatitis B and C infections; support activities to promote early detection and education, particularly in vulnerable populations, and incorporate them into existing clinical programs at the state, federal, and tribal level; and conduct research on improved treatments and vaccines; and meet other needs of the Hepatitis community as identified by advocacy groups.

As Chairman of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, Rep Honda is particularly concerned with Hepatitis's unique impact on Asian American and Pacific Islander communities. These populations suffer from disproportionately higher rates of Hepatitis B than other ethnic groups. Asian-Americans account for half of chronic Hepatitis B cases and half of deaths resulting from chronic Hepatitis B infection. Of the approximately 2 million people estimated to be infected in the United States, only 200,000 patients have been diagnosed. Most infections remain undiagnosed until the late stages of the disease. This late diagnosis often results in liver transplants, cirrhosis of the liver, liver cancer and frequently death.

Congressman Honda has been demonstrating his long-held commitment to the elimination of Hepatitis B and C. Most recently, on July 21, Congressman Mike Honda, along with a handful of committed Congressional colleagues, gathered more than 70 other people on Capitol Hill to learn about and get tested for the two serious diseases. The public event, which provided free hepatitis testing, educational materials, and counseling services, was initiated by the Chinese American Medical Society, in partnership with the Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations (AAPCHO) and several other health advocacy groups.

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