

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 21, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
U.S. Senate  
S-230, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Democratic Leader  
S-221, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Republican Leader  
H-204, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, and Leader McCarthy:

The Chairs of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC)—also known as the Congressional Tri-Caucus—and Co-Chair of the Native American Caucus, are writing with deep concern regarding the disproportionate number of COVID-19 deaths in our communities and the clear need for timely, and culturally relevant news that can help save lives. Local ethnic media outlets and local media outlets that serve minority communities are providing critical updates to communities across America but are struggling to stay afloat during COVID-19 due to major losses in the advertising revenue so critical to their business models. However, the reality is that African American, Latino, Asian Pacific American, and Native American communities need more news and information to stay healthy and safe in the ever-changing COVID-19 environment, not less.

As the nation confronts extraordinary public health and financial crises, Congress is offering emergency funding to support specific industries. We believe it is vital to include support for the local and ethnic media outlets that are best positioned to deliver COVID-19 news to communities of color, multilingual ethnic minorities, and other vulnerable populations. Considering COVID-19's disproportionate impact on our communities, it is paramount that our constituencies receive rapid and factual news from the culturally relevant sources they trust. Local media outlets such as broadcasters and news publishers are more trusted than any other news source.

To help save lives in this country's most vulnerable communities, we are asking that any new stimulus funding package include:

- Language to appropriate and direct emergency funding and federal advertising dollars for ethnic and local news media outlets that serve minority communities to ensure that these newsrooms can continue delivering uninterrupted local and community news during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Language directing all federal agencies, including but not limited to sub-agencies, to review their communications practices and public awareness campaigns to ensure that they

are effectively reaching non-English speaking populations during the COVID-19 pandemic;

- Language to support additional informational messaging and programming on how the public can manage the economic and public health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly for minority and foreign language-speaking populations and broadcasting such programming in multiple languages on radio and television stations that serve minorities and foreign-language speakers;
- Language to appropriate funding to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to support national programming aimed at reaching African American, Latino, Asian Pacific American, and Native American audiences with rapid news and factual information. This is a critical piece of infrastructure.

Many communities of color rely on their local newspapers or radio stations — oftentimes these outlets are in a language other than English — for information. So many outlets across the U.S. are providing valuable information such as:

- In Sacramento, despite seeing 60% decreases in advertising, a Spanish Language Radio station group has been hosting regular interviews with SBA officials in Spanish to reach small business owners. They are also tailoring COVID-19 information specifically to the large farmworker population in the market, providing a vital connection to a population often overlooked.
- In San Francisco, three radio stations tell the tale of the COVID-19 impact on the Asian language radio audience. KVTO-AM is the only all Chinese station in the market and serves a population of over 500,000 Chinese Americans; KVVN-AM serves in excess of 200,000 native Vietnamese speakers in the SF Bay Area; KKOK-AM broadcasts to the 250,000 South Asian (primarily Indian) population in the market. All three of these stations are experiencing at least 50% reductions in advertising for this month and are expecting higher percentages in the coming months. Asian language radio is supported almost entirely by small independently owned retail stores and businesses, since many national advertisers don't translate their ads into these languages. The very same businesses that are suffering the most during the shutdown are the lifeblood of these and many more stations. Without federal help the 1 million Asian language listeners in the San Francisco market alone, risk losing a connection to information, entertainment, and most importantly community.
- In Los Angeles, KIRN-AM is a Farsi Language station serving the Persian population in Los Angeles that is over 300,000 strong. They started a program that airs 140 times a week to highlight businesses within the Persian community that are still open. Providing free advertising for local business that are struggling to keep their doors open and their workers employed. The station is facing drastic advertising losses while providing comfort through Farsi language news and information the community needs to stay connected during the pandemic.
- In Texas, broadcasters are working to ensure that African American communities are receiving the information they need through partnerships with the Urban League, Black Chambers of Commerce, NAACP and churches. They are also working with health professionals on social media programming for the African American community on issues ranging from finance, education, student loans, credit maintenance and debt forgiveness to fitness, employment, health and wellness.

- In Northwestern New Mexico, 4 of the local Navajo-language stations have seen a decrease of about 40-50% in revenue and are on the verge of laying off staff. These stations are the only voice in their language to this community. All 4 are continuing to serve in these most difficult times. In Oklahoma, radio stations owned by the Chickasaw Nation have seen a 50% decrease in advertising revenue.
- Additionally, the entire business model for the non-profit Indian Country Today is at risk because foundations and tribes are no longer in a position to continue supporting their funding. Nonetheless because of the crisis, Indian Country Today launched a daily news show via Zoom in order to serve the community with real time information. As a reflection of the need, after two weeks, the news program has already been picked up for broadcast by public television stations.

Unfortunately, many of these already endangered outlets, are now in danger of disappearing altogether due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As African American, Latino, Asian Pacific American and Native American communities experience the disproportionate impact of COVID-19, we ask that you prioritize ethnic media and local news media outlets that serve these minority communities. They are critical components to the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic in communities of color across the country. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Rep. Joaquin Castro  
Congressional Hispanic Caucus  
Chair

Rep. Judy Chu  
Congressional Asian Pacific  
American Caucus Chair

Karen Bass  
Congressional Black Caucus  
Chair

Rep. Deb Haaland  
Congressional Native American  
Caucus Co-Chair