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LEGISLATORS, DOCTORS, PATIENTS RALLY GOVERNOR HOCHUL TO SIGN BILL TO BETTER SAFEGUARD ASIAN AMERICANS AGAINST DIABETES

Flushing, NY - State legislators today rallied with doctors, patients, healthcare professionals, and community members to urge Governor Hochul to sign their legislation to better protect Asian Americans against the growing incidence of diabetes. Specifically, the bill requires insurance companies to cover diabetes screenings at lower Body Mass Index (BMI) thresholds for Asian Americans and lower screening thresholds for other at-risk populations.

The rally follows the passage of legislation in the State Senate and Assembly this year ([S634B/ A1206B](#)), which was inspired by recent data showing Asian Americans are more likely to get diabetes despite being less likely to be overweight. Other recent [studies](#) indicate 800,000 adults in NYC are living with diabetes, including 13 percent of Asian Pacific Islanders.

If signed into law, the measure would bring New York in line with national, evidence-based guidelines established by the CDC and American Diabetes Association that recommend Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders be tested if their BMI is 23 or greater. Statistics show more than half of Asian Americans with type 2 diabetes, and even more with pre-diabetes, are undiagnosed. Initiatives like the [“Screen At 23”](#) Campaign seek to get every Asian American patient with a BMI of 23 or higher screened, as opposed to the current standard BMI of 25.

Currently, New York State covers screenings in line with the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, a national panel appointed by the Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy Jr. Codifying this standard into law would protect diabetes screenings from any potential future rollbacks at a time when the White House is leading efforts to undermine public health and access to healthcare.

State Senator John Liu stated, “Unfortunately, the current federal administration has shown us that anything is on the table when it comes to rolling back healthcare rights long believed to be protected, from access to vaccinations that protect our communities to a woman’s right to choose. New York has always been a state that follows the science, and in this case, the evidence is clear - more Asian Americans are living with undiagnosed diabetes because our screening guidelines are dangerously outdated. Both the State Senate and Assembly overwhelmingly passed these bills, and we’re

calling on Governor Hochul to sign this bill into law and correct a long-standing health disparity for Asian Americans and many at-risk communities.”

In addition to improving outcomes for Asian Americans, the new guidelines expand coverage for other at-risk populations, including: Black and Latino Americans, those over 35, patients with a family history, those with high cholesterol, people with HIV, those with exposure to high-risk medication, and those with a history of periodontal disease.

The legislation would also eliminate deductibles, copayments, coinsurance, and other out-of-pocket costs for screenings at 23, ensuring that financial barriers do not prevent early detection.

State Assembly Member Ron Kim stated, “Health disparities can be deadly, and for the Asian American community undiagnosed diabetes has become a major concern. Updating the guidelines to reflect our differences as an at-risk population will allow countless New Yorkers to get screened at a lower BMI and proactively protect themselves from preventable health issues. Senator Liu and I both did our best as the bill’s primary sponsors to ensure its passage in the state legislature, and we urge the governor to take the final step in implementing this common-sense measure. It will save lives, reduce healthcare costs, and address a health issue that disproportionately affects our community.”

State Assembly Member Grace Lee stated, “Asian Americans deserve health guidelines that are inclusive and evidence-based. As someone with a family history of type 2 diabetes, I know personally how important early screening and treatment can be. Too many Asian Americans are diagnosed too late simply because current screening thresholds don’t reflect the risks our community faces. I urge Governor Hochul to sign this bill into law so we can catch this disease earlier, save lives, and finally close this long-standing health gap.”

Dr. George Liu, President and CEO of the Coalition of Asian American IPA and the Founder & President of the Asian American Diabetes Center stated, “Early detection and preventive treatment for any disease can save lives. Recent statistics showed the prevalence of type 2 diabetes of 350,000 Chinese in New York City is over 12 percent and 30 percent for age over 65. The American Diabetes Association advises Healthcare providers to screen Asian Americans starting at BMI of 23 kg/m² instead of 25 because Chinese Americans often carry a higher percentage of visceral and central body fat at lower total body weights compared to other populations.”

Kaushal Challa, Chief Executive Officer of Charles B. Wang Community Health Center stated, “Early diabetes screening - especially in Asian American and Pacific

Islander communities, where risk begins at lower body weight - is vital to the prevention of diabetes. That's why the Charles B. Wang Community Health Center supports the efforts of our state legislators around S634B/A1206. Lowering the BMI threshold for diabetes screenings from 25 to 23 for everyone would increase access to affordable and appropriate preventative health care, allowing for early detection, better health outcomes, and also significant money saved in the healthcare system. We are proud to support legislation that aims to better the health of our communities."

Myoungmi Kim, CEO of Korean Community Services of Metropolitan New York stated, "At KCS, we work every day with Asian American community members who are at risk for prediabetes and type 2 diabetes, including many who do not appear overweight. BMI alone does not tell the whole story. Asian Americans can develop diabetes at lower BMIs, yet current screening practices can cause people at risk to be screened too late. Early screening means early action - giving people the opportunity to improve nutrition, increase physical activity, participate in diabetes prevention programs, and protect their health before diabetes develops. We urge Governor Hochul to sign S634B/A1206B so that insurance coverage reflects the real diabetes risks facing Asian New Yorkers."

Yoon Ji Kim, Executive Director of MinKwon Center for Community Action stated, "Communities of color have long been underserved to deadly effect. Asian Americans are getting diabetes at higher rates and lower body weights, yet our health system has been slow to acknowledge this reality. This bill is the difference between catching diabetes early and finding out only after irreversible damage has been done. We urge Governor Hochul to sign this bill and take a real step towards equity for Asian Americans and many other at-risk communities."

Jeehae Fischer, Executive Director of Korean American Family Service Center (KAFSC) stated, "Asian American communities have too often been overlooked by health standards that do not reflect our unique risks and lived realities. At KAFSC, we see every day how language, cost, immigration status, and lack of culturally responsive care can prevent families from seeking help early. We are proud to stand with our community to address these disparities that disproportionately affect Asian American communities. Requiring insurance coverage for diabetes screening at a BMI of 23 is a simple but meaningful step toward health equity, one that can lead to earlier diagnoses, healthier families, and ultimately save lives. We urge Governor Hochul to sign this important legislation."

Youngsoo Ha, Diabetes lifestyle coach at KCS stated, "Thirty years ago, I was shocked when my doctors told me I had diabetes. I had no signs. I lived a normal lifestyle, ate mostly healthy, and was not overweight. I didn't know about prediabetes or that a simple blood test could have warned me to take preventive actions. Today, as a

lifestyle coach and advocate, I help others get tested early and take control of their health. Asian Americans and so many others need this legislation to become law so they know to get screened early and can take steps as soon as possible to prevent or manage diabetes in the future.”

Thomas Yu, Executive Director of Asian Americans for Equality, stated, “The evidence is clear: diabetes screenings at a lower body weight threshold can help save lives in the Asian American community. We thank our legislators for championing this important legislation and urge Governor Hochul to sign it into law. This common-sense step will lead to earlier diagnosis and treatment, ensuring patients receive the critical care they require.”

Dr. Charles Lopresto, Chair of the Legislative Committee of the Medical Society of the County of Queens stated, “Diabetes does not affect every population in exactly the same way, and our approach to screening needs to reflect what the evidence tells us. For Asian American and Pacific Islander patients, a BMI of 23 can represent a meaningful threshold for increased diabetes risk, yet our insurance coverage has not kept pace with the medical evidence. I am proud to have worked with our state legislators to help bring this issue forward. Now that this legislation has passed both houses of the legislature, I urge Governor Hochul to sign it into law. Screening at the right time can mean diagnosing diabetes before a patient develops kidney disease, cardiovascular disease, vision loss, and other devastating complications we see in clinical practice.”

Dr. Pauline Lau, ABIM Board Certified in Internal Medicine, Hematology-Oncology, Board of Directors of CAIPA, stated, “Screening at a BMI of 23 for AAPIs is not to give new definitions of overweight or obesity for Asian Americans, but a number to look out for. To unmask diabetes and prediabetes in Asian Americans, we need patients to start thinking about making healthy changes. The American Diabetes Association in 2023 published the Standard of Care in Diabetes, which specified using a BMI of 23 or above in Asian American individuals. Screening AAPIs at a BMI of 23 is estimated to uncover an additional 215,000 undiagnosed cases of diabetes, and even more cases of prediabetes. In most NIH Diabetes Prevention Program Outcomes Study reports, prevention of progression from prediabetes to diabetes resulted in lower rates of developing retinopathy and nephropathy, damage to the eyes and kidneys.

“The Screen at 23 campaign began in 2015 in San Francisco. Since then, six states, including Hawaii, California, Massachusetts, Illinois, Washington State, and Virginia, have passed resolutions calling for a Screen at 23 standard. It is now our turn in New York. We passed the bills in both the Senate and the Assembly. Let’s urge the Governor to sign the bills for Screen at BMI 23 to complete the work!”

Mitchel Wu, Chinese-American Planning Council Director of Queens Community Services stated, “The Chinese-American Planning Council supports S634B/A1206B for its culturally responsive and inclusive qualities for the Asian American Pacific Islander community. As the nation's largest AAPI social service nonprofit, CPC serves over 80,000 New Yorkers in our multi-service programs, including health-related services: (HIV support, home health attendant program, services for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities, and access to public benefits) in culturally competent settings. For too long, standard diabetes screening guidelines built around a one-size-fits-all BMI threshold of 25 have failed AAPIs, even though research confirms that AAPIs develop type 2 diabetes at significantly lower body weights than other populations. In New York, where AAPIs are one of the fastest growing populations, we need to ensure that the over 1 million AAPI New Yorkers get diagnosed earlier, start treatment sooner, and avoid the serious complications that come with undiagnosed diabetes.”

Dr. Helen Chen, Family Medicine physician at Rendr, stated, “Lowering the BMI screening threshold from 25 to 23 can increase the sensitivity of diabetes and prediabetes detection by 24%. This bill represents an important step toward recognizing the unique health risks Asian Americans face and ensuring earlier access to diabetes screening. As the largest integrated medical group serving New York City’s Asian community, Rendr applauds our state legislators for advancing legislation that expands access to preventive care. This effort aligns with our mission to improve health outcomes, prevent avoidable hospitalizations, and reduce healthcare costs through earlier detection and intervention.”

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