



March 17, 2020

The President  
The White House  
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President,

As presidents of the four bipartisan national caucuses of state legislators of color, we come together to beseech you heed the advice of CDC Director Robert Redfield and stop using geographic or ethnic terms when designating or referring to COVID-19.

We do so on behalf of our members, our constituents and the more than 125 million people of Asian American, Pacific Islander American, African American, Hispanic American and Native American heritage residing in the United States who are as impacted as everyone by this pandemic. We also urge you to heed the words of our colleagues, the chairs of the four Congressional caucuses of color, in their joint statement issued concurrently and enclosed.

Using Asia-related or Asian ethnic terms when referencing COVID-19 feeds the mistaken belief that Asian Americans are more likely to be carriers of this disease. Perpetuating this belief could make the spread of the COVID-19 virus much worse in the United States. Specifically, tweets referring to COVID-19 as the “Chinese Virus” help to spread xenophobia against Asian Americans.

A virus has no race, no ethnicity, no cultural heritage. Anyone may be a carrier. And yet, since the first cases of COVID-19 were confirmed in the United States, a surge of discriminatory rhetoric and violent attacks against Asian Americans across the country has been reported. They do not deserve this, and encouraging the beliefs that drive it, even indirectly, is contrary to good public health policy.

Your primary job in this moment of worldwide concern is to unite, guide and calm the country, not to sow division or engage in deflection of responsibility and finger pointing. Americans are seeking health information, science-based guidance and trustworthy leadership from all of us as government officials. Sharing inaccurate information laced with invective only aggravates the crisis by increasing fear and inciting violence.

We reaffirm our commitment to working with your administration to minimize the impact of this crisis and express our most sincere hope that you are successful in guiding America through this dark time. In that spirit, on behalf of our Asian American brethren, we ask that you follow the advice of the health policy professionals in this regard so that we can come together as Americans.

Sincerely,

Rep. Kyle Yamashita  
NAPACSL President

Rep. Gilda Cobb-Hunter  
NBCSL President

Sen. Daniel A. Ivey-Soto  
NHCSL President

Sen. Benny Shendo  
NCNASL President

Enclosure: Concurrent statement of the chairs of the Congressional causes of color



## **For Immediate Release**

March 17, 2020

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## **Democratic Leaders of Color: Trump’s Use of “Chinese Virus” Endangers Lives**

Washington, D.C. – On [Monday](#) and again [today](#), President Donald Trump in two tweets referred to the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) as the “Chinese Virus.” He later doubled down on the use of this term during a press conference earlier today. This violates guidance issued by the World Health Organization and the promises by members of Trump’s own administration, [including Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar](#) and [Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Dr. Robert Redfield](#), to refrain from using that term precisely to describe COVID-19 because it incites blame, racism, and hatred towards Asian Americans, putting them at risk for prejudice and violence. Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) Chairwoman Judy Chu, Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) Chairman Joaquin Castro, Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Chairwoman Karen Bass, and Congressional Native American Caucus Co-Chair Deb Haaland issued the following joint statement:

“The name of the virus causing the crisis in America and around the world is the 2019 novel coronavirus, or COVID-19 for short. It has a name. But Republicans, from President Trump on down, have insisted on creating and using alternatives such as the ‘Chinese’ or ‘Wuhan’ virus. This is dangerous and they know it. The World Health Organization has said labeling a disease by region or ethnicity makes it harder to contain the disease and promotes stigma that can negatively impact ethnic groups. And the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has said creating stigma endangers public health. Yet still, Republicans are rejecting that expert guidance in order to stoke xenophobia and blame all people of Chinese ethnicity for a public health crisis that knows no boundaries. But by telling people who to blame, they are telling people who to fear and who to hate. Unfortunately, we have already seen how this bigotry has impacted Asian Americans across the country who are facing increased prejudice and violence. Many have even been assaulted to the point of needing to seek medical care in hospitals due to the injuries sustained from physical

attacks. This is the consequence of spreading xenophobia, something that cannot continue to be amplified by the Trump Administration and Republican Members. Not now, not ever.

“Republicans have a choice: they can either help contain this global pandemic, or they can exploit it and exacerbate it to serve the President’s narrow political and xenophobic interests. But by doing the latter, they are putting American lives at risk. Conversely, it’s heartening to see the four national caucuses of state legislators of color join our efforts by issuing a statement denouncing the Administration’s efforts to spread xenophobia. We are also grateful to all the local elected officials, governors, and community leaders adhering to clear, consistent messaging that rightfully places no blame on Asian-Americans or any other ethnic group. Once again, we implore all leaders to stick to expert guidance and not spread xenophobia. Lives depend on it.”