



**AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
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**Statement of Debra Kawahara, PhD, President-elect
American Psychological Association
President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific
Islanders
Advancing Equity and Inclusion for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific
Islander Communities
February 27-28, 2024**

I appreciate this opportunity to share my insights. I am Debra Kawahara, PhD, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Distinguished Professor at the California School of Professional Psychology, Alliant International University. I am the first Asian American woman and Japanese American President-elect of the American Psychological Association (APA).

First, I urge the commission to explore APA's Multicultural Guidelines. These guidelines encourage psychologists to examine cultural, systemic, and structural factors and to foster a deeper understanding of diversity, intersectionality, and individual/community characteristics. APA Services supports increased resources for multilingual materials and translators to enhance healthcare access and community engagement. Language access is vital for trust-building and stigma reduction.

Second, discrimination remains a significant issue. According to APA (May 2023), racial discrimination experiences correlate with behavioral health issues such as depression, anxiety, and PTSD, and physical ailments like diabetes, hypertension, and obesity. Young adults facing frequent discrimination are significantly more likely to develop behavioral health disorders and severe psychological distress. APA Services endorses community-based strategies to combat discrimination and hate crimes.

Lastly, the behavioral health field faces severe workforce shortages, especially for culturally responsive providers. Investments in the Minority Fellowship Program, funded by SAMHSA, are crucial to improving behavioral health outcomes for racial and ethnic populations. In its 50 years, the program has seen 2200 fellows participate, including 393 Asian Americans. With the strong support of APA Services' advocacy, funding has steadily increased for the program.

These actions are vital for advancing equity and well-being among Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities.

Thank you again for the opportunity to give comments today.