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**COMMUNITY UPDATE:
HOUSE PASSES HISTORIC HEALTH CARE REFORM LEGISLATION**

Washington, DC – In the most significant reform to health care in America since the creation of Medicare, the United States House of Representatives passed the *Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act* (H.R. 3590) late Sunday evening with a 219-210 vote.

The Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC) applauds Congress for its hard work to fix America's broken health care system. While the bill is far from perfect, SEARAC welcomes the much needed reform that will enable millions of uninsured Americans to gain access to health care. In addition, insurance companies will no longer be able to discriminate against and deny insurance to those with pre-existing conditions.

SEARAC is disappointed, however, in the bill's failure to lift the 5 year ban for lawfully present immigrants to access Medicaid, and in the bill's exclusion of undocumented immigrants from participating in the health insurance exchange even with their own money. Along with our colleagues, SEARAC remains committed to advocating on these and other health issues affecting our communities.

Doua Thor, SEARAC's Executive Director, states: "Leaders in the United States House of Representatives demonstrated steadfast determination and courage in working to improve the lives of all Americans. The quality of life for countless Southeast Asian Americans will vastly improve as a result of this groundbreaking reform. This is a first step in the right direction to ensuring that all Americans have access to a quality of life that had been denied to millions."

The health care bill passed this weekend also included education provisions such as major changes to the student loan program, expansion of the Pell Grant program, and most importantly, major investments in Minority Serving Institutions like the Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISI) program. As an organization that advocates and cares deeply not only about the health of our nation but also access to affordable high quality education for all youth, this is a much welcomed change. SEARAC remains strongly committed to continuing our work for comprehensive health and education reform.