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**President’s Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (PAC-AAPI) Convenes Inaugural Open Meeting and Virtual Listening Session**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – On May 20th, the President’s Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders convened its Inaugural Open Meeting with all fourteen (14) Commissioners in attendance. U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross and U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine L. Chao, Co-Chairs of the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, provided welcoming remarks at the meeting, which commenced with the official swearing-in ceremony of Commissioner Helen Van Etten of Kansas.

The Commission is tasked by President Trump’s Executive Order to provide advice to the President, through the U.S. Secretary of Commerce and the U.S. Secretary of Transportation, on how to broaden access by Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) employers and communities to economic resources and opportunities.

“We appreciate your advocacy for the more than 1.9 million AAPI-owned businesses, and for the 22 million Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, many of whom have been so adversely impacted by the pandemic.” Said U.S. Secretary Wilbur Ross in his welcome remarks. “Your work on their behalf is more important than ever before. Secretary Chao and I look forward to your advising us and President Trump on how best the U.S. Government can serve this vibrant and growing American community.”

U.S. Secretary Elaine L. Chao highlighted the four areas that both the Commission and the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are focused on: Passing the Torch, Breaking the Glass Ceiling, Bridging the Income Gap, and AAPI Women in Leadership. In highlighting the ways the AAPI community can better take advantage of federal resources and opportunities, she shared: “Secretary Ross and I recently signed a letter to re-establish the White House Initiative Interagency Working Group. This group consists of representatives from throughout the federal government who will advise the Initiative on the implementation and coordination of Federal programs as they relate to Asian Pacific American access to economic resources and opportunities.”

Dr. Paul Hsu, Chair of the Commission, provided opening remarks and convened the meeting by addressing the task at hand. “President Trump has clearly outlined in his Executive Order our mission is to improve the lives of all AAPIs and their communities, which will always be our guiding principle and our roadmap. That is exactly why we are here today.”

The President’s Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders also convened their first virtual AAPI Business Town Hall with business owners, chambers of commerce and business associations on Wednesday, May 19th, a day prior to the open meeting. Chair of the Commission, Dr. Paul Hsu and Commissioner Herman Martir facilitated this listening session hosted by the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. About 200 AAPI business and community leaders participated with many of the Commissioners also in attendance.

As the Commission prepares their advisory reports, these town halls and listening sessions reflect the mission and importance of the Asian American and Pacific Islander community to our country. Many of the speakers provided insight on how the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak has affected AAPI-owned businesses across the states and U.S. territories, including Guam and American Samoa. Town hall Speakers represented 9 different states and U.S. territories, while audience participants hailed from 31 different states and U.S. territories. In response to

concerns about harassment of AAPIs due to the virus, the Initiative’s interagency working group is coordinating with the U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service (CRS) to ensure active engagement with local communities on addressing these issues.

These public forums also provided a platform for federal officials and trade groups to highlight resources and opportunities. At the AAPI Business Town Hall, the U.S. Census Bureau provided a presentation on the Small Business Pulse Survey, which asks small businesses to share the impact of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak on their business. There was also an update on the ongoing 2020 Census, including the latest response rate, information about the extended window for response to the Census, highlights of the partnership and outreach campaign, and ideas about virtual ways that partners can support the Census is the upcoming months. The U.S. Census Bureau’s partnership program is working with more than 6,000 organizations across the country that serve the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities

Following the U.S. Census, the Small Business Roundtable, a coalition of leading small business and entrepreneurship organizations, presented a read out of their State of Small Business Report. This report will be the first of an ongoing series that tracks the activities of small businesses across the country.

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*Advancing the economic empowerment of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders*

**About WHIAAPI & PAC-AAPI:** Established by President Trump, the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (WHIAAPI) and the President’s Advisory Commission on AAPIs (PAC-AAPI) work to broaden access by Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) employers and communities to economic resources and opportunities, thus empowering AAPIs to improve the quality of their lives, raise the standard of living for their families and communities, and more fully participate in our economy. The President’s Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (PAC-AAPI) is established pursuant to Executive Order 13872 (May 13, 2019) to advise the President, through the Secretary of Commerce and the Secretary of Transportation. The PAC-AAPI and the WHIAAPI Office is located in the US. Department of Commerce and the Minority Business Development Agency provides financial and administrative support for the performance of the Commission’s functions.