

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 5, 2003

The Honorable José E. Serrano
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State, and the Judiciary
Committee on Appropriations
2227 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-3216

Dear Congressman Serrano,

We greatly appreciate your efforts to secure additional funding for the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) in the 2004 Commerce, Justice, State, the Judiciary, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill (CJS). You know as well as any of us the importance of providing affordable legal services to our country's most needy.

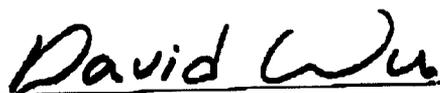
We want to express our increasing concerns regarding an unfair and unnecessary provision in the CJS Appropriations bill that restricts the use of private and other non-federal funds by independent legal services providers funded in part by LSC. This "private money restriction" encumbers more than \$300 million annually in non-federal funds -- money that could be used to provide critical legal assistance to our society's most vulnerable individuals and families.

The existing private money restriction burdens independent community-based legal service providers with unwarranted costs, impedes private charitable initiatives, and undermines our nation's promise of equal justice for all.

As members of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), we are particularly concerned about the lack of competent and linguistically accessible legal services available to Asian Pacific American (APA) communities. Such funding restrictions especially limit legal services available to our nation's most vulnerable refugee and immigrant communities. Coupled with the emerging threats of hate crimes and increased discrimination, heightened following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the necessity of access to affordable, competent legal services for APAs is irrefutable.

It is our hope that the Committee on Appropriations will revisit the private money restriction when it considers the 2005 CJS Appropriations bill. We urge you to continue your leadership on behalf of America's families by guiding efforts in your Subcommittee to achieve greater access to justice.

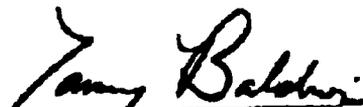
With warm regards,



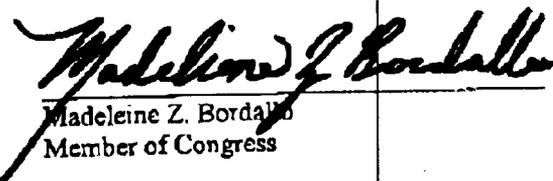
David Wu
Chair, CAPAC



Michael M. Honda
Vice Chair, CAPAC



Tammy Baldwin
Member of Congress



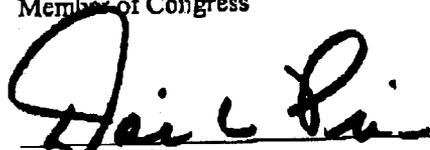
Madeleine Z. Bordallo
Member of Congress



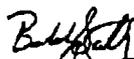
Ed Case
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