

**Testimony for Ways and Means Subcommittee on Social Security Hearing on “Save Our
Social Security Now”
Rep. Chu
September 24, 2020**

Thank you, Chairman Neal, Ranking Member Brady, Subcommittee Chairman Larson and Subcommittee Ranking Member Reed, for inviting me to speak at this important hearing today.

Today, we are in the midst of an unprecedented pandemic and economic crisis. Yet, President Trump is using this crisis to call for terminating the payroll tax, which would defund Social Security. This is the wrong approach. According to the Social Security Administration’s Chief Actuary, eliminating payroll taxes – as the President has called for doing – would essentially destroy the Social Security system in just a few short years. The President should instead sign into law the Heroes Act, which would extend unemployment benefits and provide another round of stimulus checks to Americans who are still suffering as a result of this pandemic.

As Chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), I can say that Asian-American and Pacific Islanders (APIs) are undoubtedly going to feel the pain of this misguided policy. In fact, despite the model minority myth, older APIs are the group most reliant on Social Security. According to the National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development, during the last recession, the poverty rate increased 40 percent for Asian American seniors and an astonishing *191 percent* for Pacific Islanders. This is because APIs often take lower paying jobs due to their immigration status and language skills, which means they do not have any savings when it is time for them to retire.

In 2015, annual household incomes for Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean seniors were all below \$28,000, nearly \$6,000 less per month than the national average. Asian Americans are also less likely to receive pensions from their employers, and 53% rely on Social Security for almost all of their income. In addition, more than half of APIs with disabilities rely on Social Security Disability Insurance for 75% of their income. The API population is contributes billions of dollars into the Social Security system and deserve to receive this benefit that they have earned over their lifetimes.

Additionally, I want to draw the Committee’s attention on how important Social Security benefits are for women. We have already seen the disproportionate impact that this pandemic is having on women, many of whom have had to drop out of the workforce, either because of job loss or family obligations, meaning they are earning less during this time. Women generally have longer life expectancies than men, and on average earn less than men do over the course of their careers. As a result, 55 percent of women over the age of 65 rely on Social Security for more than half of their income and 27 percent rely on it for more than 90 percent of their income. Therefore, they tend to rely more on Social Security benefits in retirement.

We need to ensure that seniors and future generations can retire, and that the Social Security system can support future generations of Americans. I am proud to be a co-sponsor of H.R. 8171,

the Save Our Social Security Now Act, and H.J. Res 96 to overturn the Trump deferral of payroll taxes.

I thank Chairman Neal and Subcommittee Chairman Larson for their leadership on this issue and I yield back.