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April 4, 2001

The Honorable Tommy G. Thompson  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Thompson:

On behalf of the members of the National Alliance for Hispanic Health, I write to you today to encourage the Department to continue its three decades long policy of enforcing Title VI of the Civil Rights Act ensuring access for limited English proficient (LEP) persons to DHHS programs. As you know, the Alliance is the nation's oldest and largest organization of Hispanic health professionals. Our members serve over 10 million Hispanic health consumers every year.

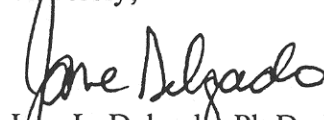
It is disappointing that some of the nation's health professional associations would advocate that DHHS depart from its enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. It is disturbing that any health professional would react to the Department's recent "Policy Guidance on the Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination As It Affects Persons With Limited English Proficiency (August 20, 2000)" as if it was counter to their current standards of good health practice and a new regulation. The importance of communication and trust in the patient-provider relationship is taught in every health professional school in the country and that is the basis of the Department's policy guidance.

The facts are that the Department's recent LEP policy guidance dates its history to the May 25, 1970 issuance of a Policy Memorandum, "Identification of Discrimination and Denial of Services on the Basis of National Origin," issued by the then U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Furthermore, the recent policy guidance reflects not only the legal standards of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, but also a long history of court rulings.

Services to LEP persons is a key component of ensuring access to health care for the Hispanic community. Indeed, research by the Department's Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) has found that one-half to three-fourths of access barriers for Hispanics are associated with factors other than income and insurance and instead with factors such as LEP barriers.

It is vital to the health of the Nation that DHHS enforce its decades long policy, including the most recent policy guidance, ensuring access for LEP persons. It is simply good clinical practice.

Sincerely,



Jane L. Delgado, Ph.D., M.S.  
President and CEO  
National Alliance for Hispanic Health

cc: Judge Alberto R. Gonzales