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**PRESS RELEASE**

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## Asian American Contractors Included in City of Chicago's M/WBE Program

Chicago, July 29, 2009 – The Asian American Institute (AAI) is pleased to announce that the Chicago City Council has voted for the continued inclusion of Asian Americans as a presumptive category in the city's minority- and women-owned business enterprise program for construction contracts (the "M/WBE program"). The current M/WBE program was set to expire at the end of this year, but the ordinance passed at today's City Council meeting extends the M/WBE program through the end of 2015 and calls for an interim review by the end of 2012.

"Past exclusion from the City of Chicago's M/WBE program has harmed Asian American construction contractors, and we applaud the City Council for recognizing the sound evidence that Asian Americans face ongoing discrimination in public contracting," said Ami Gandhi, Legal Director of AAI. "The extension of the M/WBE program will help Asian Americans, other minority groups, and women work toward the goal of having equal footing in the public contracting arena," she added.

The Chicago City Council had previously removed Asian Americans as a presumptive minority group in the M/WBE program because a federal court case opined that there was insufficient evidence that Asian Americans suffered from discrimination. There was a resulting outcry in the Asian American community, which does indeed face discrimination, particularly in the realm of public contracting. AAI has worked with the Association of Asian Construction Enterprises to secure the inclusion of Asian American contractors in the M/WBE program, attempting to dispel the untrue myth that Asian Americans are the "model minority."

"We are glad that the City of Chicago continues to include Asian Americans as a presumptive category in the M/WBE program, because we truly need this program in order to have a fair chance at obtaining public contracts," said Christine Chung, member of Association of Asian Construction Enterprises.

"While we are very pleased with the City Council's vote today, our work is not done," said Tuyet Le, Executive Director of AAI. Before the interim review in 2012 and before the ordinance expires in 2015, additional comprehensive studies of minority contractors must be completed. "The City must use researchers who not only understand minority communities but who also know how to accurately study the discrimination that they experience."

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*The Asian American Institute ([www.aaichicago.org](http://www.aaichicago.org)) is the region's pan-Asian nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering and advocating for the Asian American community through coalition-building, education, and research.*