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Governing Board of Pew Research Center
1615 L Street, NW Suite 700
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Members of the Governing Board:

We write to you with respect to some recent developments that have arisen out of Pew's research efforts on Asian Americans. We are directors of the institutions that comprise the Asian American and Pacific Islander Policy Research Consortium (AAPIPRC), and seek to provide some constructive input on ways that the Pew Research Center can improve its research on Asian Americans. As you may know, the Center's image and credibility, especially among Asian American researchers, national non-profit organizations, and members of Congress, has come under strain due to some missed opportunities. We have communicated these thoughts to the relevant senior staff on the *Rise of Asian Americans* report released recently, but have yet to see any recognition or progress in terms of future research plans or the ways in which reports are framed for public consumption.

We respect and value the work of Pew on matters related to demographic trends, labor market outcomes, and public opinion. Many of these issues are not well understood by the general public, and the Research Center plays a valuable role in informing the public on important patterns and trends. We were thus excited to hear the news that Pew was going to be releasing a report on the Asian American community, based on survey and demographic research. We felt that it would advance our research and understanding of Asian Americans.

The first report from this project, however, proved to be a significant disappointment, especially in terms of how the research was framed and in terms of advancing our knowledge of the demographic and social conditions of Asian Americans. The *Rise of Asian Americans* report came under heavy criticism from various quarters—scholars, news columnists, public officials, service providers, civic groups, and others—for framing the research in a way that is now widely recognized as outdated and misleading. The demographic research in the report was also limited, failing to match prior work on the complexity and diversity within the Asian American community, based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

We expressed our concerns in an open letter to Paul Taylor, attempting to engage in a fruitful conversation on ways to improve future research and framing. Other groups also expressed similar concerns, and have met with Taylor and other senior staff. From our interactions, and reports from those meetings, we are not yet confident that the work of Social and Demographic Trends on Asian Americans will be changed in any significant way moving forward.

Some of the perceived constraints may be more endemic to the way that the Pew Research Center views its work, and we hope that this letter will initiate a conversation among the Governing Board to critically evaluate how the Center engages and frames research on Asian Americans and other minority populations in the United States. We offer below some examples of actions that the Pew Research Center should take to improve its work with respect to research on Asian Americans.

- 1) *Hire senior Asian American researchers with deep knowledge of the community.* This will help to ensure that the organization has in-house expertise on what facts about Asian Americans are meaningful and illuminating, and what are misleading or otherwise unhelpful from a research perspective. Pew currently has this expertise in place for Pew Hispanic.
- 2) *Ensure a more thorough peer review process on major reports.* Peer research institutions like RAND, the Public Policy Institute of California, Brookings, and American Enterprise Institute rely on a meaningful process of internal and external review. These include a single-blind or double-blind review process with extensive dialogue and feedback between research staff and reviewers. These procedures do not seem to be in place at Pew Research Center, if they were they would strengthen the organization's standing in the research community in instances such as the *Rise of Asian Americans* report.
- 3) *Pay more careful attention to framing.* Pew Research Center is an independent research organization and much of its value derives from its nonpartisan and neutral orientation. However, in cases such as the *Rise of Asian Americans* report, where Pew had never done such research in the past, the framing of the study would have benefited from conversations with organizations that have had a long history of research and service to Asian American communities. We believe as well that having a research or community liaison to manage these relationships would strengthen the work and reputation of Pew Research Center considerably. Additionally, the manner in which the Asian American advisory group was comprised and utilized with regard to the *Rise of Asian Americans* report should be carefully reviewed. This review could inform Asian American scholars and the Pew Research Center on how to establish more productive relationships in the future.

All of these suggestions will, in no way, threaten the independence of the Pew Research Center. Indeed, they will make its work stronger and better understood. Furthermore, this list is by no means exhaustive, but is intended to stimulate further discussion among the

Governing Board. We are also happy to communicate further with the Board on these matters.

We believe that Pew is in a critical phase as its work is increasingly done in-house and as it becomes a predominantly DC-based organization. It is also in the process of selecting new leadership who will set the tone for the next decade or more of work by the Pew Research Center. This is an important opportunity for the Board to think creatively about ways to improve the effectiveness and reach of the Center.

Sincerely yours,

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